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**Screenplay: movie script or literature?**

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**Screenplay: movie script or literature?**

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IN STUDIES AND PRACTICES OF THE ARTS**

**by**

**Ali Saeed Zanjani**

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## Résumé

L'existence de centaines de scénarii dans les librairies, qu'il s'agisse de nouveaux textes ou de rééditions de textes plus anciens comme celle de *Citizen Kane*, prouve que les scénarii sont lus pour leur valeur littéraire et non pour les seules indications techniques en vue de la réalisation filmique. Malgré ce fait, la nature du scénario en tant que genre littéraire autonome, à la fois fictionnel et narratif, n'a pas été sérieusement identifiée et étudiée. C'est le sujet que nous essayerons d'examiner dans la présente recherche.

Il existe un consensus parmi les spécialistes des études cinématographiques et les scénaristes pour admettre que le scénario est une sorte de guide pour la réalisation d'un film, un modèle à partir duquel les réalisateurs, les acteurs et les techniciens peuvent travailler. Ils rejettent l'aspect « œuvre littéraire » du scénario parce qu'à leurs yeux celui-ci manque de « mérite », et trouvent la conception artistique de l'écriture scénaristique « provocatrice » plutôt qu'« évocatrice. » Cependant, bien que leurs critiques n'hésitent pas à rejeter la valeur littéraire du scénario, elles ne clarifient pas le terme « littérature. » Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?

Dans son livre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* Jean-Paul Sartre répond à cette question. Il reconnaît que l'acte littéraire dépend d'un grand nombre de facteurs : le goût personnel, le but de l'écriture, mais aussi l'histoire, le temps, les conventions et beaucoup d'autres choses encore. En d'autres termes, il n'y a aucune définition et description concrètes de la « littérature. » « L'art de l'écriture » est aussi ouvert et souple que n'importe quelle convention sociale. Nous croyons, en ce qui nous concerne, que le scénario est un genre littéraire parce qu'il propose une structure linguistique spécifique. Connaître les éléments qui forment la langue artistique du scénario et la manière dont ils fonctionnent est la clef pour entrer dans une relation littéraire avec le scénario. Que l'on apprenne la nature de ce langage, et notre perception du scénario changera. Etudier les caractéristiques de ce langage, tel est l'objectif de notre recherche.

## Introduction

The existence of hundreds of screenplays, some new some reprints of the old copies like *Citizen Kane*, in bookstores indicates that there are readers who approach screenplays for their literary values not the technical information they normally provide for shooting films. In spite of this fact, the nature of screenplay as an independent writing which is fictional and also narrative has not yet been seriously challenged and identified. This is the subject that we will try to examine in the following.

The most logical and accessible places that one may think of to begin searching for the identity of screenplay are the same bookstores that display screenplays; the title of the shelves that place the screenplay can be a good indication to its nature. However, different bookstores have different categories for this purpose. One may find screenplays under the title of "Entertainment" in one bookstore and in the shelves of the "Art Instruction" in the other. "Theater" shelves, "Film, Actors and Directors" shelves, and even "Autobiography" shelves are also hosting screenplays. So searching for the identity of screenplay in bookstores in fact provides only a proof of inconsistency.

The introductions written to the screenplays, the platform from where a book usually introduces itself, do not offer a convenient picture of the identity of screenplay either. In the first place, a number of screenplays do not have any introduction from which one can get an idea about the thought of the writer on this issue. *Eyes Wide Shut*, written by Stanley Kubrick (Kubrick, 2000), *The Holy Grail*, written by Graham Chapman (Chapman 2002), and *Memento*, written by Christopher Nolan (Nolan, 2001), are a few examples.

Some scripts do have introduction, but they do not discuss the particularities of screenplay; rather they talk about the film that is made from it. The examples are numerous. The introduction to *Star Wars*, written by Laurent Bouzereau is all about the making of the film *Star Wars* (Bouzereau, 1997, p. 1-3).

Moreover, some introductions refer to their related screenplays only to describe their story lines or to mention the motivations behind their writing. In the introduction to the screenplay *Hours*, David Hare remembers how Scott Rubin, a Paramount producer, asked him to transfer “*The Hours*”, a novel by Michael Cunningham into a screenplay (Hare, 2002, p. 2).

There exist a few introductions which approach the screenplay from the identity aspect, but these approaches are not convenient to draw a creditable conclusion from either. They are more commentaries as opposed to investigated facts. To get a better picture of what they reflect, we will look into a few examples.

Roderick Javnes, a well-known Hollywood editor, believes that the screenplay is a sort of guideline to the shooting of a movie. He rejects the “literary artifact” of the screenplay because of what he calls lack of “merit”:

I have never thought much of the motion picture scenario. It has its uses, I suppose, a rough sort of guide to the actual shooting of a movie- and of course the thespis need a *vade mecum* from which to memorize their lines. But beyond this, the utility or interest of a motion picture script seems nil. It is not a literary artifact, not having been written for publication and therefore never attracting the grade of authors who would merit it. (Coen, 2002, p. viii)

David Cronenberg, the famous film director and screenwriter has a similar view. He also engages similar reasoning to reject the independent literary values of the screenplay. In the introduction to *David Cronenberg Collected Screenplays*, he begins his argument by posing a question: “How can anyone possibly read a film script?” He then continues by saying, “A script is not writing. A script is a ghost of something not yet born. It is by nature imprecise, inchoate, and provocative rather than evocative.” (Cronenberg, 2001, p.1)

Richard Eyre agrees with both Cronenberg and Javens on the rough nature of screenplay as a text. He also believes that screenplay has one function and that is its role as a guideline to the shooting of film. He uses the word “blueprint” to describe this role. In the introduction to *IRIS*, he writes: [Screenplay] has no integrity as literature, at best it is a blueprint for what the editor, actors and technicians are going to build upon it. (Eyre, 2002, p.vii)

What Cronenberg, Javens, Eyre and many other writers who have briefly discussed the nature of screenplay emphasize on, are two things: one, the screenplay is a technical text, a blueprint or guideline, functioning only within the territory of a film. Second, the screenplay lacks literary values. These beliefs, generally accepted by people working in film industry, seem to be shared by many other film experts as well.

Since the beginning of cinema, film theoreticians and film critics have always exempted the screenplay from their investigation into the principles of filmmaking. They have discussed different aspects of filmmaking, including its ability to tell a story, with no reference to its original map, the screenplay. Sergei M. Eisenstein and Andre Bazin, two well-known film theoreticians and film critics, also reject the independent values of screenplay, although in a passive manner. It is interesting to know that both experts even refer to the similar techniques of story telling in cinema and literature. In an essay partially devoted to “Narrative Technique” in cinema, Andre Bazin articulates the comparable function of narrative technique in literature and film (Bazin, 1971, p.31). And, in 1934, Eisenstein appeals to filmmakers to adapt the “new quality of literature” in cinema. This “adaptation” is again a straight transformation from “literature” to “screen” without passing over the screenplay:

In 1924 I wrote, with intense zeal: “down with the story and the plot!” Today, the story, which then seemed to be almost “an attack of individualism” upon our revolutionary cinema, returns in a fresh form, to its proper place. I consider that besides mastering the elements of filmic diction, the technique of the frame, and the theory of montage, we have another credit to list-the value of profound ties with the traditions and methodology of literature. Stretching out its hand to the new quality of literature-the dramatics of subject-the cinema cannot forget the tremendous experience of its earlier periods. (Eisenstein, 1997, p.17)

Like the classics, the contemporary film critics examine the narrative techniques of cinema on the screen isolated from its written text. David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson, the writers of "Film Art", considered by many as the Bible of film schools, extensively discuss "how films may embody narrative form", yet without referring to the screenplay (Bordwell, 1990, p. 54).

The reception of the screenplay in all different corners of cinema is alike. There is no attention to its quality, no talk about its ability to narrate, no mention of its dramatic techniques, no reminder of its structure, no evaluation of its characters. And all the while the number of screenplays being published in book format is growing.

If the screenplay, as some believe, has no literary value and it is written as a guideline for a specific group of technicians working on a film project, what does it do in bookstores? This is a question that some of the film experts have tried to address in their comments. Kenneth Lonergan, the author of the screenplay *You Can Count on Me*, counts three reasons to answer this question: professional reasons, curiosity and curiosity again. He writes:

I imagine most people read screenplays for professional reasons, or because they are curious about the origins of a movie they've already seen [...] as such, it may be fun reading for admirers of the film who want to see for themselves the difference between a written and an acted scene. (Lonergan, 2002, p.ix)

Stephen King believes people buy screenplays to use them as a remote control. He states that the screenplay enables people "to leaf back" and "rewind" the pages in order to locate the "things" they are looking for:

As with a book, you will be able to leaf back to check on things you may have missed or to savor something you particularly enjoyed; you will use the REWIND button on your remote control instead of your finger, that's all. (King, 1998, p.xviii)

Paul Mayersberg even doubts the usefulness of screenplay as a "rewind" tool. He argues that since video allows people to run and rerun the film itself there is no use for the screenplay:

It seems to me that simply to publish the screenplay as it appears in the final film is not particularly useful, since video and DVDs allow you to run and rerun the film itself. (Mayersberg, 2000, p.1)

These statements show how some experts intolerantly reject any intellectual use for the screenplay. They present all sorts of possibilities regarding the purchase of a screenplay but its potential to be read. If there were people who bought the screenplays to use them as a remote control, how realistic it would be not to assume that there were people who bought them for their writing values?

These are of course personal opinions not proven facts. There is no investigation of any kind behind these arguments; no interview, for example, with the people who buy screenplays to know why they do that. The lack of confirmed statistics is clearly reflected on the arguments they pursue; they are biased and sound unrealistic. Plus, the abovementioned experts do not clarify the premises that they have established their statements based upon; the two terms, “screenplay” and “literature” are either left undefined or perceived wrongly. What is literature and what is screenplay?

It seems some of the abovementioned script experts have confused the screenplay or “author script” with the “shooting script” or “production script” which is a working version of the screenplay with some technical details. The book *Element of Style for Screenwriters*, defines the screenplay or author script as follow:

The author’s script is free of all technical or production impedimenta, such as numbered scenes, numbered inserts and (especially) camera angles. The author’s script is properly formatted and reads quickly and easily. However, allowances are made in formatting so the author can clearly describe what he sees in his mind’s eye vs. what he must put down on paper to make that vision as clear as possible. (Argentini, 1998, p. 34)

According to David A. Cook, the writer of *A History of Narrative Film*, some Hollywood studios of thirties and forties would use the term “screenplay” for what is known today as a “shooting script.” As a matter of fact, they wouldn’t differentiate between the two terms because there were not two versions of the same text one written as “screenplay” and one as “shooting script.” The screenplay was the same as the shooting script (Cook, 1990, p. 920). Since then, however, the term “screenplay” or “author script” has only been used



for a plain description of the scenes and the dialogues, without detailed descriptions for the shooting. The “shooting script” stands for the version which has all the related technical directions. What Stephen King, the writer of the screenplay *Storm of the Century*, describes in the following quote is in fact the characteristics of a shooting script not a screenplay:

The scripts that follows makes a complete story, one that’s been overlaid with marks – we call them “scenes” and “fades” and “inserts”- showing the director where to cut the whole into pieces. (King, 1998, p.xvii)

The cutting of the “whole” into “pieces”, which is called “breakdown” and occurs on the pages of “shooting script” is the work of the director of the film and some other experts, not of the screenwriter. It is the director and the editor of the film who also decide where to “fade” or “insert” a shot if there is a need for it.

Confusing the screenplay with the shooting script is not a common slip among people who work in film industry though; the majority of them know exactly what these two terms are. Overlaying the characteristics of one on the other seems to be a more frequent mistake. Many of those who judge the screenplay as a technical text view it through the relationship they have with the shooting script. They read the screenplay based on the technical position they routinely take in making a film. That is why for them the screenplay becomes a “text to be read as a guideline.” The following passage, taken from the introduction to the screenplay *IRIS*, reflects this fact:

How do you read a screenplay? It depends who you are. To the prospective investor, screenplays are prospectuses; to the prospective actor they are bait; to the producer they are agendas to be costed; to the first assistant director they are scenes to be scheduled; to the casting director they are shopping lists; to the crew they are menus and instruction manuals. Each technician sees in bold what most concerns them: time of day to the lighting cameraman, weather to the production manager, numbers of extras to the first assistant, age of character to the make-up supervisor. The stage direction: “It is raining, can mean the crew has to be supplemented by a dozen rain technicians, two cherry pickers, a water tanker and a fire engine. An innocently unspecific reference to a pot of jam on a table can result in a prop man placing a dazzling array of branded and homemade confections before the director. (Eyre, 2002, p.vii)

This is how many film experts view the screenplay. They don't read it as Kenneth Lonergan says for "fun." (Lonergan, 2002, p.x) They read it to assess their work's needs. They approach it through the professional experience they have established with the shooting version. That is why the screenplay is a "ghost of something not yet born" and it is a "*vade mecum*" from which actors memorize their lines. Wouldn't a novel become a technical text for them, if they had approached it to assess their technical needs?

The reasons that some of the film experts rely upon to reject the literary values of the screenplay are varied. Some point out at its structural style. Some mention its texture. Some remind us of its abrupt cuts. Some refer to its lack of ability to motivate and intrigue readers' imaginations. Some refer to the errors of spelling and punctuation occurring in many screenplays. Some even undermine the writing skills of the screenwriters.

Scenarists are inevitably amateurs, boobies, and hacks and their scripts are inevitably shoddily bound and shot right through with errors of spelling and punctuation — not to speak of the lapses of taste." (Coen, 2002, p.viii)

It is true that many of the abovementioned traits can be found in a screenplay, but this does not automatically strip off its literary values. A novel may have errors of spelling or punctuation too. A poem may also jump all over the place. And some readers might perceive a play "tasteless." What makes a text literature and another text non-literature is not the temperament of its grammar but other principles.

In his book, *What is Literature*, Jean Paul Sartre (Sartre, 1988, p. 23) uses the term "the art of writing" instead of literature. He argues that, since critics condemn him in the name of literature without ever saying what they mean by that, the best answer to give them is to examine the art of writing without prejudice. And what is "the art of writing?" He says, it depends on many factors; personal taste, the purpose of writing (why does one write and for whom one does write), history, time, conventions and many other factors. In other words there is no concrete definition and description for "literature." "The art of writing" is as open and loose as any social convention. "What is literature" can be addressed in fact by this question: what do we mean by literature? While describing different forms of

novel, Jerome Stern recalls the followings, which reflects the chaotic situation over the concept of literature:

Novels vary drastically in length, in structure, in scope, and in content. They have been written in the form of letter, diaries, dreams, visions, memoirs, monologues, confessions, collages, poems, and commentaries on poems. They have been written entirely without dialogue. They have ranged from fragmented little observations of tiny moments to encyclopedic epics embracing entire cultures. They have been written with multiple endings so readers can choose the one that pleases most, and they have been written on loose pages so that readers can continually rearrange the entire narrative. (Stern, 1991, p. 167)

The term literature can be applied to different types of writings ranging from a novel to a manuscript. It may also change its meaning from place to place and from time to time. What may be called literature in one culture might be considered non-literature by another culture. A history book from the fifteenth century may now be perceived as a work of literature and on the other-hand a classic epic may be approached as a historical reference. In such an elusive situation how can one examine a writing to detect its literary values? How can one measure something that there is no standard measurement for it? If the novel can be written in form of “commentaries on poems” and “on loose pages so that readers can continuously rearrange the entire narrative,” why not in form of a screenplay? What would prevent us from believing that the screenplay is also a different type of literature? What does a “literary writing” have that the screenplay lacks?

The first common characteristic that one can identify in the vast field of literature is its fictional nature. Literature, like other types of art is fictional not factual. There might be a fact behind a work of literature, a story might be written based on a real event or it might be inspired by a real event, but the act of creation (representation) on its own is fictional not factual. Oxford Dictionary defines fiction as: “literature in prose form, describing imaginary events and imaginary people.”

The second distinctive characteristic that many literary works share is their storytelling habit. Most literary works are constructed in a way to tell story. There are types of literature that are not narrative, like certain types of poems. In general, however,

narration is the most known characteristic of literature. "Narrative" according to *Film Art* is: "a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space. A narrative is thus what we usually mean by the term "story" (Borwell, 1990, p.55).

By identifying these two basic characteristics one can conclude that if a writing is "fictional" and "narrative" it is initially a work of literature and since the screenplay reflects both characteristics it is a literary work too. If this is a valid conclusion, which seems to be, a question arises: why is it then in spite of having the two basic literary traits, the screenplay is not yet recognized as a genre of literature? The answer, we believe, rests in the artistic language of the screenplay; the way it is constructed to express its thoughts and shares its feelings. As a "narrative" and "fictional" writing, the screenplay like the novel and play, carries all the required elements for an "artistic language," it has plot, it has character, it has dialogue, it has description and it has "thought." But the way these elements work within the format of the screenplay, both individually and collectively, are different from those of the other narrative writings. This has created a different result and accordingly demands a different reading. Stephan King pictures the differences between the two languages of the screenplay and the novel through referring to two different computer programs he uses to write his stories; one for writing screenplay, the other for writing novel.

I wrote *Storm of the Century* exactly as I would a novel, keeping a list of characters but no other notes, working a set schedule of three or four hours every day, hauling along my Mac PowerBook and working in hotel rooms when my wife and I went on our regular expeditions to watch the Maine woman's basketball team play their away games in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The only real difference was that I used a Final Draft screenwriting program rather than the Word 6 program I use for ordinary prose. (King, 1998, p. xi)

As Stephan King symbolically portrays, the difference between the two languages of the screenplay and the novel is caused by the different ways that their story telling elements function; the patterns of their plotting, the way they develop their characters, the way they describe or make dialogues, and ultimately the collective function of all the elements that form the language of each discipline. It is through knowing these facts that we communicate with different disciplines efficiently. This is true about the screenplay as

well. Knowing the elements that form the artistic language of the screenplay and the way these elements function is the key to communicate with the screenplay literarily. Should we learn the content of this language our perception about the screenplay will change. Studying the characteristics of this language is what our research is aiming for. We intend to examine the four elements of storytelling in the screenplay (plot, character, thought and diction) through comparing them with those of the novel. As a base to build our discussions upon we will use Aristotal's book on the "art of poetry," *The Poetics*,

*The Poetics* has undoubtedly been the most authentic literary guidebook throughout history. It has inspired writers of all kinds: novelists, playwrights and screenwriters. Many fiction instructors also used this book as a guideline in their workshops. Michael Tierno, a screenplay instructor, begins his book "*Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters*" with this prologue:

Aristotle's *Poetics* has become to Hollywood screenwriters what Sun-tzu's *The Art of War* is to Mike Ovitz. So what if it's more than 2,000 years old? 'It's 42 pages of simple, irrefutable truths and the best book on screenwriting,' says writer-director Gary Ross (Pleasantville), who used *Poetics* as a text in classes he taught at UCLA and at the University of Southern California. (Tierno, 2002, p. viii)

In *The Poetics*, Aristotle meticulously outlines the dimensions of the fictional writing and the techniques of story telling. He details their features and shows how they function, how they capture the attentions of the readers, and how they affect them. He also analyses the steps needed to be taken in order to dramatize a story or in fact to construct an artistic language to communicate with the addressees. *The Poetics* therefore would be an appropriate reference for our study.

The methodology of the research will be comparative analysis. We will analyze Aristotle's thoughts on the issues that are related to the language of the arts in general and the language of narrative writing specifically. We then compare them with the thoughts of the contemporary theorists on the techniques of storytelling in two major genres of narrative writings, the novel and the screenplay. We believe comparative analysis is the right method for the research because the subject of the study is concrete and open to

examination and accordingly demands a direct and handy methodology. In this regard neither field research, like interviewing people and conducting a poll, nor argumentative or historical research can be as constructive.

While examining different types of literary criticisms in France of sixties, Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1971) distinguishes two trends: one “interpretive” or “ideological” and the other “academic.” Ideological criticism, according to him, must be attached to one of the major ideologies of the moment like existentialism, Marxism, psychoanalyses, phenomenology and so on. And the “academic” types are the ones which reject every ideology and act based on an objective view. Our approach towards Aristotle’s *Poetics* will be of “academic” type. We will use *The Poetics* as the main reference source to establish a base for the research, not as an ultimate literary theory source.

The research will begin with a brief history of the screenplay’s development followed by examination of the four elements of story telling in the novel and the screenplay. After studying Aristotle’s definitions of any of the four elements, we will examine the views of novelists and scriptwriters on the subject. A comparison between different views on each element will wrap up the related part. The research will end with the analysis of an interdisciplinary work, a screenplay-novel titled *Between Borders*, which claims to stand between the boundaries of the novel and the screenplay.

## **Chapter 1**

### **(Screenplay)**

Tragedy developed little by little as men improved whatever part of it became distinct. Many changes were introduced into tragedy, but these ceased when it found its true nature.

(Aristotle, 1961, p. 9)

### **1. Development of Screenplay**

What Aristotle says about the process of development in tragedy is true about that of the screenplay. In its brief history, the screenplay improved little by little and its different elements gradually became distinctive. Like tragedy, the screenplay experienced many new things and went through many changes until it found and established its language. However, there is a big difference between the two disciplines. Script of a tragedy, according to Aristotle, has its own dramatic strengths and can be approached independently. Aristotle says, script of a tragedy should be made so “efficacious” that it can create emotions on its own. The development of the screenplay, however, has been always subordinated to the development of the “screen.” The screen would experience a new technique first, and then the screenplay would adapt the new experience into its language. The history of the screenplay, therefore, is directly related to the history of technology and innovations in cinema. Digging into this common root is the beginning of our search into the language of the screenplay.

The notion of “screenplay” in a basic meaning was born during the early days of cinema. The first “screenplays” as one may imagine were the little sketches outlining the shooting of the early short films, guiding the camera towards what to see, how to see and when to see. As the technique of cinema developed and the structure of the films became more complex the form and the duties of the screenplay also changed. The screenplay became more profound and more detailed to the extent that would direct most of the activities on the set, ranging from the subjects that the camera had to see to the dialogues that the actors had to read. This development, however, as it was mentioned was aligning with the development of the techniques of cinema. Any new film experience would directly affect the screenplay too. In fact the screenplay would empower its ability to explore and to express, as it would do with the ability of the film. When dolly was invented, for example, the camera could move towards the subjects, so could the screenplay. When sound was invented not only film could speak but the screenplay could speak too. When color was added to the films the world of the screenplay became colorful as well. This development evidently affected also the capacity of the screenplay to tell story. It neared its narration strength in fact to that of literature. The screenplay now could go as far as the imagination of the scriptwriter would go, just as it has been in the case of the novel and the novelists.

The short history of cinema meticulously has marked all the stages taken during this process. It shows how and when a new film technique has been exercised and accordingly has affected the form and the content of the screenplay. It also shows how the film conventions that were soon developed had restricted the screenplay. In order to follow the relationship between motion picture’s technology and the entity of the screenplay we will examine a number of the “screenplays” or parts of the screenplays written during different periods of history of cinema, mainly during the first three decades when the most inventions and film discoveries took place. These screenplays are of narrative type and since the original transcripts of some of them were not available, we reconstructed them based on the films that would represent them on the screen or quoted them from valid sources. We begin with *The Waterer Watered*, made by Louis Lumière.



### 1.1 *The Waterer Watered*

On March 22, 1895, the Lumière brothers screened their first film, *Workers Leaving the Factory*, to a private audience in Paris. The film was a short documentary, showing the workers of Lumière's own factory leaving work. On December 28, 1895, the second theatrical display of Lumière's films took place in the basement of the Grand Café, on the Boulevard des Capucines. A program of ten films was shown for the first time to the general public. Among the films of that program was a comedy by the title of *The Waterer Watered*.

*The Waterer Watered* was in fact the demonstration of the ability of the new camera (still camera was already in the market) to narrate. While making the first documentaries, examining the ability of the moving camera to record and represent movements, the Lumière brothers had realized that even though the course of the events recorded by the camera is irreversible, it is possible to control the process of its recording. In *Workers Leaving the Factory*, they had controlled the acts of the workers; the workers knew when to open the door, in which way to get out of the factory and how to scatter around in front of the camera. In *Train Arriving at the Station*, the Lumières had set the camera in a position to get both the arrival of the train and its stopping (the control of the view). These facts prove that before making *The Waterer Watered*, the Lumières knew how to control their recordings. *The Waterer Watered*, however, was the first fully controlled film. The Lumières not only had controlled the setting (the location, time, acting, dressing, etc); they had also controlled the course of the events. And that was the beginning of narrative cinema.

*The Waterer Watered* has a simple structure and a simple story. A man is watering a garden with a hose. A little boy enters the garden from behind the man and steps on the hose. The water stops running and the man peers into the nozzle to find out the cause. The boy takes his foot off the hose and the water splashes to the man's face. The man runs after the boy, catches him and smacks him on the back. He then goes back to his job.

Although the film has a straightforward story, it has a complete plot of three parts, the beginning, the middle and the ending. The beginning part begins from the start of the film to the moment that the water stops running: an obstacle on the way of a routine. The man looking for the cause of the blockage and finding it out makes the middle part. And the third part begins from the time he sees the boy to the end of the film when everything goes back to normal again.

The three parts of the plot, however, are short and happen in a rapid manner. The course of an act that in a normal situation would take at least a few minutes to accomplish, in *The Waterer Watered* takes only 49 seconds (the longest strip of film that the magazine of the first camera could hold). The duration of the events in the film is in fact compressed to embed within this restricted time. The actors act and react quickly. They create a problem, look for its cause, find it and solve it, all in a few seconds. The speed of the actions, evidently, affects both the development of the plot and that of the characters; although the plot seems to be formally completed, it is dramatically undeveloped. The two elements of surprise and suspense that are supposed to drive the story forward get lost in the speed of the film.

The personalities of the characters are also shadowy. They appear and disappear within a short period of time without leaving enough information to the viewers to know who they are and what they are. The little information that one can get about their identity comes from their emotional reactions (both characters show satisfactory and dissatisfactory in two different occasions of victory and defeat). And also, the way they are dressed up, one can guess that they both belong to the middle class family of the time. Rather than these little sources of information, there is no other reference to the identity and personality of the characters.

Aside from the compressed plot, the film has other dramatic deficiencies. It is silent; it cannot reveal any audio information about the location and the event of the story. We don't know, for example, what the components of the ambiance are. Are there birds singing in the trees? Are there any other noises around? The music, the sound of the

water hitting the grass, the voice of the characters running after one another! Without audio information there is a gap in the line of narration.

Furthermore, the film is black and white and that decreases even more its ability to share information with the viewers. What colors are the grasses or the trees? Are they green, brown or yellowish? What colors are the shoes of the characters? Is the shirt of the boy yellow? Is it blue? There is no reference to the colors in the film. The memory and the assumption of the audiences and their ability to associate with the subjects are the source of color information.

The whole film is shot through one lens and that flattens the view of the events. There is no close up of the nuzzle or the hose, for example, when the water splashes to the man's face. Or there is no close up of the boy's foot stepping on the hose. The lack of lens variation in the film causes us to miss many details of the event that could help to get a better picture of it.

Immobility of the camera limits our view on the scene even further. In the chase event for a brief moment the man and the boy leave the frame without camera being able to follow them. The story is visually discontinued and the viewer is therefore disturbed. What does happen out of the frame where and when they disappear? Maybe not much, but if the camera could pan to the left, the flow of visual information wouldn't stop and we wouldn't get disturbed.

The actors' performance is unnatural. Not only they overact, which is partially due to the influence of the stage acting practiced at the time, but they also do strange things. At the end of the film since the camera cannot go forward to see the act of the punishment after the man catches the boy, the man brings the boy to the camera for the act.

The result of all these deficiencies is a product which is dramatically poor. A short film that brought laughter and wonder to the early audiences, was not able to move them emotionally. The reflection of such a film on a screenplay would of course create similar situation for the readers. If the audience of the film were not able to chase the characters while they were running around in the garden due to the immobility of the camera, the

readers of the screenplay representing the film on the paper would experience the same affect. The weaker the film to communicate with the audience, the weaker the screenplay would be in communicating with its readers.

If we transfer all the above-mentioned deficiencies into a blueprint (script), the form and the content of the blueprint would be something similar to what we described at the beginning of this discussion, a synopsis of one paragraph. The screenplay of the first narrative film in fact couldn't get any more expanded due to the limits of the film making techniques at the time. The turning of the same subject into a film in different periods of history of cinema would have different results in terms of quality. If we were to rewrite the screenplay of *The Waterer Watered* relying on the filmic techniques available in our time, for example, the outcome would be a screenplay that could see better, hear better and move around much easier than the script of Louis Lumière. In our screenplay, we wouldn't need to compromise the building of our plot and our characters for the small magazine of the camera or for lack of our knowledge about editing. Today we have cameras that can hold up to twelve-minutes rolls of film. With the video and digital camera the length of the film can be even longer, over two hours. Our cameras can record in variety of speeds: normal speed, slow speed and fast speed. They can also zoom back and zoom forward.

Nowadays we have variety of lenses, from extremely wide to extremely narrow. We have several tools to move the camera in all directions: crane, dolly, track, car, helicopter, camcorder etc. There are different filters available to us to control the lighting of the environment, different film stocks to shoot in different lighting situations: interior, exterior, morning, mid day, in the snow in the fog, etc. We can record a subject with sharp vision or blurred, colored or black and white.

Furthermore, we have sound recording system with different kinds of microphones: omni directional, one bi-directional, tram and so on. We can record the sounds of the scenes directly or dub the sounds later in the lab. We can record the conversation of the characters in wind, in traffic, in enclosed locations and so on.

We can also change the color tone of the films in the lab. We can use different film stocks to get different color textures. We can superimpose two pictures or overlap them. We can make masks to delete a part of a scene or to add something to it. We can manipulate pictures to create all sorts of expressionistic affects such as melancholy, sadness and happiness.

Today we know the principles of editing very well. We know how to convey a thought or an emotion through juxtaposition of shots, or how to change the rhythm of the pictures to the pace of the subject's mood. We know how to create illusion, how to cut a shot of the Eiffel Tower, for instance, to a shot of a person's eyes standing anywhere in the world, suggesting that he or she is looking at the tower.

By having all these techniques at our reach, we can now put almost anything that we imagine in our screenplays. We can run our pens into the territories that traditionally were belonged to literature. If we decide to write a new screenplay based on the subject of *The Waterer Watered*, the technical restrictions that Louis Lumière was facing are not going to bother us any more and that will result to a screenplay that is closer to literature.

## **1.2 *A Trip to the Moon***

Georges Méliès was among the guests attending the Lumière's first screening. After the show, he who was a magician and a cartoonist, attempted to buy a cinematograph from the Lumière's, but they promptly refused his offer. Several months later, Méliès bought an Animatograph projector from Robert W. Paul, an English inventor, and reversed its mechanical principle to design his own cinema. By April 1896, Méliès was ready to show his first production. Soon he was among the biggest film producers of his time.

One day, the story goes, as he was filming a street scene, when a bus was passing by, the camera jammed. After fixing the camera Méliès started filming again, now the bus has gone and a hearse was passing instead. Méliès recorded the passing hearse as well. In the screening, he discovered something unexpected: a moving bus suddenly seemed to transform itself into a hearse. Through this accident, Méliès realized the huge potential

that cinema has for laboratory manipulations, an option that he soon developed and along with his other innovations like montage, added to the dictionary of cinema. By the turn of the century Méliès had made tens of films establishing his name as one of the masters of narrative cinema.

*A Trip to the Moon* (1902) was one of Méliès' finest products, revealing some of his influential innovations, particularly montage. Méliès adapted the story of the film from the Jules Verne's novel of the same title, *A Trip to the Moon*; the story of a group of scientists traveling to the moon and confronting with "Selenites." To narrate the long story on the screen, Méliès created a technique that became one of the most important if not the most important element of cinema's language. He divided the component of the story into thirty separate scenes or tableaux and filmed them separately. He then connected the separate scenes together and made a film of 825 feet long, which would run around fourteen minutes at the average silent speed of 16 frames per second. It was the first time a filmmaker could narrate his story through more than one role of film. The arrangements of the scenes in *A Trip to the Moon* are as follow:

*A Trip to the Moon* (Scenc description)

1. The scientific congress at the Astronomic Club.
2. The planning of the trip itself.
3. The construction of the projectile in the factory.
4. The factory rooftop at night, with chimneys belching smoke in the background.
5. The boarding of the projectile by the astronomers.
6. The loading of the canon (complete with female "Marines" in short pants and tights).
7. The firing of the canon.
8. The flight of the projectile through space.

9. The landing of the projectile in the eye of the moon (an action overlapped in the next shot).
10. The projectile landing, moon side, and the astronomers disembarking.
11. A view of the moon's topography.
12. The astronomers' dream (visions of the Pleiades and Zodiac signs).
13. A snowstorm on the moon.
14. The astronomers descent into a crater.
15. A grotto of giant mushrooms in the interior of the moon.
16. Encounter with the moon creatures, or Selenites (acrobat from the folies-Bergere).
17. The astronomers taken prisoner.
18. The astronomers' brought before the King of the Moon and his Selenite army.
19. The astronomers' escape.
20. The Selenites' pursuit.
21. The astronomers' departure in the projectile.
22. The projectile falling vertically through space.
23. The Projectile splashing into the sea.
24. The projectile at the bottom of the ocean.
25. The rescue and return to land.
26. The astronomers' triumphal return.
27. The decoration of the heroes.
28. Procession of "Marines."
29. The erection of the commemorative statue.

30. Public rejoicing.

(Cook, 1990, p.17)

As the above scene description illustrates Méliès' technique not only enabled cinema to tell long stories, but also affected the ability of the screenplay to tell story as well; the screenplay could now reflect longer stories, longer than one roll of film. Should we rewrite the screenplay of *A Trip to the Moon*, (a full description of all the scenes; the actions, the look of the characters, the subject they discuss, etc), the result would be a long narrative text that automatically would contain some of the techniques of story telling in literature; description, plot, character and more importantly diction (the choice of words). A text that surely would have more in common with literature than the tiny script of the "*The Waterer Watered*" does.

### **1.3 *Life of an American Fireman***

Edwin S. Porter was an experienced projectionist when he joined the Edison's Manufacturing Company as a mechanic in 1900. In 1901, he became production head of the company's new skylight studio and began to produce his first films; one shot documentaries such as *New York City in a Blizzard* and *Pan-American Exposition by Night*. In *Pan-American Exposition by Night*, Porter modified his camera to expose a single frame every ten seconds (the technique of time-laps photography) and produced an extraordinary circular panorama view of the illuminated downtown New York. In the following years, he practiced other film making techniques, some like "intercutting between the interior and exterior of a scene" and "parallel action," became basic structural element of narrative cinema. In *Life of an American Fireman* (1902), Porter cut together the interior shots of a blazing room in which a mother and her child are trapped, with the exterior shots of a fireman climbing a ladder to rescue them. Through this new technique, he created the illusion of one continuous action being seen from two different points of view. In *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), he practiced parallel action; conveying two different acts happening simultaneously. To view the reflection of these



two techniques on the paper, we copy the brief scene descriptions that David Cook has made from the both films.

#### Life of an American Fireman (Scene description)

1. The fire chief asleep, dreaming of his wife and a child, who appear in a circular vignette at the upper right-hand corner of the screen, later called the “dream balloon”.
2. Close-up of a fire-alarm box and an anonymous hand pulling its lever (Porter’s first close-up to be completely integrated with its narrative context). All other shots in the film are long shots.
3. Interior of the firemen’s dormitory, with the men first asleep, then waking in response to the alarm- a slight temporal overlap from shot2- dressing, and sliding down the pole.
4. Interior ground floor of the firehouse, actually an outdoor set, with the pole in the center upon which no one has yet appeared; workers harness the horses to the engines, and the firemen finally slide down the pole from above at the conclusion of the scene, as the engine races off to the right. There is a significant temporal overlap and redundancy of action between shots 3 and 4, clearly establishing narrative space and time.
5. Exterior of the firehouse as the doors are flung open and the engines charge out, overlapping the action of shot4.
6. Suburban street scene: eight engines rush past the camera from right to left, passing a crowd of bystanders (stock footage apparently, since it’s snowing in this scene but nowhere else in the film).
7. Street scene: four engines rush past the camera, which pans (moves horizontally on its vertical axis) slightly to follow the fourth and comes to rest on the front of a burning house
8. Interior of the house: the mother and child in an upstairs room filled with smoke.
9. Exterior of the house: the mother approaches an upstairs window and calls for help.
10. Interior: the woman collapses on a bed.
11. Exterior: a fireman enters the front door.

12. Interior: the same fireman runs into the room through a door at the right and breaks the window (which was open in shots 9 and 11, but closed in 8 and 10).

13. Exterior: firemen on the ground place a ladder against the broken window.

14. Interior: the fireman carries the woman to the ladder, which has appeared at the window.

15. Exterior: the fireman and the woman descend the ladder.

16. Interior: the fireman enters the window by the ladder and picks up the child.

17. Exterior: the woman becomes hysterical.

18. Interior: the fireman exits through the window with the child.

19. Exterior: the fireman descends the ladder with the child and reunites with it the mother.

20. Interior: firemen enter the room through the window to extinguish the fire with a hose.

(Cock, 1990, p.23 )

Based on the above scene description Porter has cut seven exterior scenes from the rescue operation to seven interior scenes of the burning house (scene 7 to the end of the film) to create the effect of one continuous action through two different standpoints. Although the logic of temporal relations in cutting has not worked out the way it should be (we see the rescue of the mother and her child twice, from both inside and outside the house), Porter's attempt to create the technique, however, introduced one of the principles of narrative continuity and development to cinema. The effect of this technique on the screenplay was obvious; it was for the first time that the screenplay could view one act from two different angles.

### 1.4 *The Great Train Robbery*

*The Great Train Robbery* was made in 1903, just a few months after the release of *The Life of an American Fireman*. Porter wrote the screenplay, directed, photographed and edited the film. The length of the film is about twelve minutes at the average standard silent speed of 16 frames per second and consists of fourteen separate shots which are connected by straight cuts.

#### *The Great Train Robbery*

(Scene description)

1. Interior of the railroad telegraph office: two bandits enter and bind and gag the operator while the moving train, visible through the office window, comes to a halt.
2. Railroad water tower: the other members of the gang board the train secretly as it takes on water.
3. Interior of the mail car with scenery rushing by through an open door; the bandits break in, kill a messenger, seize valuables from a strongbox, and leave.
4. Coal tender and interior of the locomotive cab: the bandits kill the fireman after a fierce struggle, throw his body off the train and compel the engineer to stop.
5. Exterior shot of the train coming to a halt and the engineer uncoupling the locomotive.
6. Exterior shot of the train as the bandit force the passengers to line up along the tracks and surrender their valuables; one passenger attempts to escape, runs directly into the camera lens and is shot in the back.
7. The bandits board the engine and abscond with the loot.
8. The bandits stop the engine several miles up the track, get off, and run into the woods as the camera tilts slightly to follow them.
9. The bandits scramble down the side of the hill and across stream to mount their horses; the camera follows them in a sweeping vertical movement, or panning shot.

10. Interior of the telegraph office; the operator's daughter arrives and unites her father, who then runs out to give the alarm.
11. Interior of a crowded dance hall: a "tenderfoot" is made to "dance," as six-guns are fired at his ; the telegraph operator arrives and a posse is formed.
12. Shot of the mounted bandits dashing down the face of a hill with the posses in hot pursuit; both groups move rapidly toward the camera; one of the bandits is killed as they approach.
13. Shot of the remaining bandits examining the contents of the stolen mail purchase; the posse approaches stealthily from the background and kills them all in a final shoot-out.
14. Medium close up (a shot showing its subject from the mid-section up) off the leader of the bandits firing his revolver point blank into the camera (and, thus, the audience) a shot which, according to the Edison Catalogue, "can be used to begin or end the picture."

(Cook, 1990, p.27)

*The Great Train Robbery* introduces its story of hijacking of a train in the first scene. Two bandits enter a railroad telegraph office and restrain the operator. The following scenes pick up the action and continue it throughout the film. In *A Trip to the Moon*, Méliès advances the story of his film the same way; a chain of related events carry the dramatic intention that is set in the first scene to the end. There is a major difference between the two treatments though. In Méliès' film, there is no gap between the connected scenes in terms of action; each scene begins exactly where the previous scene has ended. Scene 9, for example, shows astronomers board the spaceship and get ready to be launched into the space. Scene 10 portrays a group of female Marines loading the canon to launch the spaceship. In Porter's film, *The Great Train Robbery*, each scene also carries a part of the story, but the part does not begin where the previous scene has ended. Each scene portrays an action that is already in progress. Scene one, for example, ends when the bandits suppress the operator. Scene two begins when other gang members board the train. The next scene shows inside the mail car. Each scene begins abruptly and ends also abruptly. This is how Porter could convey a sense of simultaneous action. By

hiding parts of each scene from the viewers he suggests that those parts have happened while the viewers were watching the other scene. The reflection of parallel act on the screenplay empowered it to travel between various locations.

### **1.5 *The Birth of a Nation***

Tens of books are written about Griffith and his film techniques that revolutionized cinema. Many film experts believe Griffith established the language of cinema, as we know it today; his brilliant use of close up, his sophisticated continuity editing and his subtle parallel acts, became some of the principles of this language. Eisenstein says, “It was in his works [Griffith’s works] that the cinema made itself felt as more than an entertainment or pastime.” (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 204)

Kuleshov, the famous Russian film teacher, would use Griffith films, particularly *Intolerance*, as a model for his teaching experiments. He would dismantle and reconstruct the film in his classes to show to his students how the language of cinema works.

Griffith’s style in narration is similar to that of the novel. Griffith himself admits that he has been influenced by the writings of Charles Dickens, the novelist. It is said, that once his producers refused his idea about the treatment of a film because it had “too many scenes.” Griffith went home, reread one of Dickens’s novels and came back the day after to tell them, “they could either make use of his idea or dismiss him” (Cook, 1990, p.67).

Griffith’s style is dynamic. His camera moves around the scenes restlessly to find different viewpoints for narration. In his famous assassination scene in *The Birth of a Nation* (1913), Griffith constantly travels back and forth between five different spots to develop the needed suspense mood for the assassination. The following scene description of the assassination sequence can give a taste of Griffith style. It shows how like novelists he goes around the set to collect his dramatic materials, and how like them he smoothly connects them together.

The sequence begins with a caption (Title) giving some information about the coming events; Elsie Stoneman, one of the characters of the story and her brother Phil attend a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford's Theater in Washington.

*Assassination Scene*

(The Birth of a Nation)

Title (Caption):

The gala performance to celebrate the surrender of Lee, attended by the President and staff. The young Stonemans present.

An historical facsimile of Ford's Theatre as on that night, exact in size and detail with the recorded incidents, after Nicolay and Hay in Lincoln, a history.

Scene 1

In the theater.

Elsie and her brother come to the seats. On the way they speak to their friends sitting here and there. Elsie then looks through her opera glasses.

Title:

The play: *Our American Cousin* starring Laura Keane.

Scene 2

On the stage and in the theater.

The painted curtain rises. Two maids are dusting the tables on the stage. The actors enter onto the stage. Audience applause. Elsie also applauds and smiles at her brother. The actors bow to the audience and come forward to receive flowers.

Title:

Time, 8:30

The arrival of the President, Mrs. Lincoln, and party.

Scene 3

Backstage and in the theater.

President Lincoln and his companions walk in a dark and shadowy hallway. They enter into presidential

box (Loggia). The audience sees them and stands up to cheer. Elsie and her brother also applaud. President Lincoln bows and sits down. The audience keep cheering.

Title:

Mr. Lincoln personal bodyguard takes his post out side the presidential box.

Scene 4

Backstage.

Guard enters into the hallway and sits on a chair in front of the presidential box door.

Scene 5

In the theater.

The audience is still cheering and waving handkerchiefs. President and Mrs. Lincoln bowing. The play tries to go on. Two actors come forward.

Title:

To get a view of the play the bodyguard leaves his post.

Scene 6

On the stage and in the theater.

The actors are playing on the stage. President Lincoln's bodyguard, the one who was sitting in a chair behind the presidential box, leaves his spot and comes to the theater to watch the show.

Title:

Time. 10:13

Act III, scene 2

Scene 7

In the theater.

A man is standing in a corner of the theater. He looks suspicious. Elsie sees him and shows him to his brother. She asks who he is.

Title:

John Wilkes Booth.

## Scene8

In the theater and on the stage.

The man (Booth) is still waiting in a shadowy corner of the theater. Elsie looks at him through opera glasses.

On the stage, the actors are acting.

## Scene9

In the presidential box and in the theater.

President Lincoln feels cold and reaches for his shawl. Booth is watching him. Lincoln draws the shawl around his shoulders. Booth goes to the box door. President's bodyguard is watching the show. Booth opens the door behind him.

## Scene 10

In the hallway behind the presidential box.

It is dark. Booth enters softly into the hallway, locks the door and peeks through keyhole at the presidential box door. He then pulls out his pistol, opens the door to the box, and creeps in behind president Lincoln.

## Scene11

On the stage.

The actors are on the stage. It is a comic scene. People cheer.

## Scene 12

In the presidential box.

Booth gets closer to president Lincoln and shoots at him. He then jumps on the stage and shouts.

Title:

"Sic semper tyranny!"

## Scene 13

On the stage.

Booth runs away.

## Scene 14

In the presidential box.

Lincoln slumped down. Mrs. Lincoln calls for help.



Scene 15

In the theatre.

The audience is standing up in turmoil. Elsie faints. Her brother supports her.

Scene 16

On the stage

A man climbs up into the presidential box to help president Lincoln.

Scene 17

In theatre.

The audience is agitated. Elsie and brother leave.

Scene 18

In the presidential box.

They carry Lincoln out.

Title:

[Stoneman told of the assassination.]

(Ibid, p.88)

Elise and Phil are in the hall, watching the play. A group of actors are on the stage, performing. John Wilkes Booth is planning his assassination plot in a corner of the theater. President Lincoln arrives and enters into presidential box. President's bodyguard sits behind the door of the presidential box. Five different locations and five different events get smoothly connected to each other through the glue of montage. Filmmakers before Griffith knew montage, of course, but it was Griffith who established the concept of montage as we know it today. Griffith's approach towards montage was complicated, yet simple. He used montage as novelists use "conjugations" and "prepositions"; conjugations and prepositions are in fact the equivalences of montage in literature. Griffith translated them into the language of cinema. If we connect a detailed description (whatever the camera sees) of the eighteen scenes of the assassination sequence through conjugations and prepositions, the result will show how Griffith has neared the skill of narration in cinema (accordingly the skill of narration in the screenplay) to that of the novel.

## 1.6 *Shoot the Pianist*

To select the last screenplay for a quick study we pass over 47 years of the course of filmmaking (since the release of *The Birth of a Nation*) and land on the year 1960 when *Shoot the Pianist* was made by Francois Truffaut. During the intervening years the world of motion picture continued to experience new inventions and innovation. German Expressionism, French Experimental and Impressionism, Soviet Montage, French New Wave and Italian New Realism were among the film movements that deeply enriched the language of cinema. In technology, color, sound, new lenses, better quality film stock, new moving camera tools and so on, greatly improved the practice of filmmaking. The result of all these were reflected on the production of hundreds of more developed and more sophisticated films. As we mentioned earlier, the improvement of cinema in general affected the characteristics of the screenplay in a specific way; it improved its ability as a written text to explore and to express. The following sequence taken from the screenplay, *Shoot the Pianist* clearly shows this progress.

Characters:

Narrator (voice over)

Charlie is the husband of Theresa and the older brother of Fido.

Theresa is the wife of Charlie.

Fido is Charlie's youngest brother, a boy of about twelve

Plyne is the proprietor of the café.

Lena is a waitress at the café.

PIC, stands for picture.

*Shot the Pianist*

(one scene, picture and sound description)

PIC.

A newspaper front page which announces the suicide of Theresa, Charlie's wife. A barely discernible view of scrap yard, Theresa is lying in the road, dead, now cars in the junkyard, now a roadway, now a café exterior in a poor quarter.

Voice:

Newspaper reads "wife of noted pianist throws herself from fifth floor."

Music:

Charlie's characteristic piano music starts.

Lena's voice:

You disappeared. You began a new life. Edouard Saroyan became Charlie Koller. You visited your brother in the snow and ask them to let Fido live with you. One day you found yourself at Plyne's.

Music:

The piano music stops.

PIC.

Interior café by day. Plyne is mending a table. Charlie is sweeping the floor.

Voice:

You must have swept that floor a 48 thousand times. There was a little upright battered piano in a corner. A distance engine hood. You spent all your time -- looking at it, walking all around it, looking at it again. One day you asked Plyne:

Charlie:

Can I play a bit?

Plyne:

Eh?

Charlie:

I think I now how.

Plyne:

Go ahead then. But you better arrange it with Sabine.

PIC.

Sabine, Plyne's mistress, enters and picks up Charlie's cleaning utensils and walks towards the door.

Charlie sits at piano.

PIC.

Full face of Charlie, left profile, seated at piano. He looks down at keyboard, serious, then begins to play.

Music:

(Classical piano music begins.)

(Music mixes to Charlie's Café tune.)

PIC.

Interior of café. Night time. In a rectangular mirror above the piano Charlie is seen playing. He is enjoying himself.

Lena's voice:

Who is Charlie Koller? Little known. He's a pianist. He looks after his little brother. Above all, he wants no trouble.

PIC.

Charlie and two other musicians on the stand. People are dancing.

Voice:

Thanks to you, the local people started coming every evening to dance, and it got to be quite a place. Plyne took on extra staff, and some musicians.

PIC.

Victor the drummer.

Voice:

Victor the drummer, who was always laughing without knowing why.

PIC.

Francois the buss player.

Voice:

And his brother François the buss player with his long hairy hands.

Francois hands on the buss.

PIC.

Exterior of the café. Night. The pavement outside the café. A poster on the outside wall advertising "Charlie Koller."

Music:

The jaunty music of the café piano gradually mixes to a quieter, more dreamlike theme.

PIC.

Interior of bedroom (Lena's). A poster of the wall announcing a concert to be given by Edouard Saroyan. The door, a radio, a window, a bowl of gold fish, a bust (i.e., a piece of sculpture), a bra and other cloths on a chair, and finally the bed with Charlie and Lena in it. They are kissing each other gently.

Lena's voice:

On my birthday, when I kissed every day, it was just so that could kiss you, you know. Then I saw you looking at me, and I looked at you, too.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed, moving in their sleep.

Voice:

What were you thinking about when we were walking together in the street last night?

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed, moving in their sleep.

Voice:

Did you like me right away? Do you remember the evening you said to me?

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed, moving in their sleep.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed.

Voice:

When I took your arm I was afraid you'd be shocked.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed, moving in their sleep.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed.

Voice:

I wanted you so badly to take mine.

PIC.

Charlie and Lena in bed, moving in their sleep.

PIC.

Lena in bed.

(Reisz, 1991, p.335)

There is a huge difference between the little sketch of *The Waterer Watered* and the above complex text taken from the screenplay, *Shoot the Pianist*. Both texts are fictional and both are narrative, but one only describes an event; the other goes deep inside an event to explore it. However, the transformation from a simple descriptive text into a complex writing as we saw, took place under the direct influence of the development of motion picture technology. In other words, the “complex writing” reflects in fact the “complex cinema.” According to Aristotle this “act” means that the screenplay “imitates” the “means of imitation” of the other discipline. Does this fact devalue the artistic concept of the screenplay?.

At the beginning of *The Poetics*, Aristotle discusses the origin and development of arts in general; their forms and the motivation behind their creations. He classifies the arts based on three factors: the object they imitate, the medium or means they employ to imitate and their manner.

By “object imitated” he means the model that the artists use to construct their work is based upon. Aristotle believes all the artworks have a model, no matter what discipline they belong to; painting, music, literature, etc. Without a model to imitate, either directly or indirectly, in front of the eyes or in the mind, the artist cannot create his/her work. The notion of “art” in fact wouldn’t come to life if human’s desire to “imitate” were not behind it. Even the artworks created within one discipline get their identity through their relationship with “imitation.” In an example Aristotle says Sophocles is the same kind of imitator as Homer, for “both imitate superior men.” In other respect, Sophocles is like Aristophanes, because “both present their characters in action.” (Aristotle, 1961,p.7)

By “medium employed” Aristotle means the discipline that the artist adapts to make his artwork. He says “Some people imitate and portray many things by means of color and shape...others imitate by means of the voice” (Ibid, p.3). Painters’ means or medium of imitation therefore is color and writers’ medium is words, etc.

By “manner” of imitation, Aristotle means the principle which artists consider in forming their artwork. “ One may imitate the same model by the same means, but do it in the manner of the narrator... or one may present the personages one is imitating as actually performing actions before the audience” (Ibid, p. 6). “Manner” then is the conventions and the artistic agreements that artist decides to perform within.

So “imitation” is a common act among all the arts. What to imitate, how to imitate and through what medium to imitate are the factors that differentiate arts from one another. In this regard the screenplay, like other disciplines, imitates a model or represents a model. It also has its own manner of imitation and it uses its specific means to imitate. However, the screenplay uses its means of imitation in an indirect way; it uses them to imitate the means of imitation of cinema which are sound and picture. And as we saw, according to Aristotle, this act does not undermine the concept of creation in the screenplay. Because it can be considered as its “manner”, a part of its principles and its “artistic agreements.” So from this view, the screenplay is no different from the other disciplines. But how does the screenplay materialize its practice of narration is something that we will look for in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2

(Plot)

### 2. The art of Poetry

Aristotle begins his discussion on the “art of poetry” by differentiating its various genres: comedy, epic, dithyrambic poetry and tragedy. From the four genres, he escapes analyzing Dithyrambic poetry (a choral song similar to opera). On the other hand he gives his most attention to tragedy. Comedy is also discussed in *The Poetics*, enough to inform us that its plot structure shares the same elements of Tragedy except for its mood; comedy has a funny nature, tragedy has a serious nature. After tragedy, epic receives Aristotle’s most attention, with its structure which is fundamentally different from that of tragedy. Considering these facts one can conclude that *The Poetics* overall discusses the structure of mainly two types of literary writings: tragedy and epic. In chapter VI Aristotle defines and describes tragedy as follow:

Tragedy, then, is the imitation of a good action, which is complete and of a certain length, by means of language made pleasing for each part separately; it relies in its various elements not on narrative but on acting; through pity and fear it achieves the purgation (catharsis) of such emotion. (Aristotle, 1961, p. 12)

The passage counts some of the most important principles of tragedy. First it says, tragedy is the “imitation of a good action.” By “good action” Aristotle means an action that has the potential for dramatization. Imitating a good action does not mean copying a simple physical activity, but reconstructing the dramatic energy exist within the nature of some life activities. In chapter VI, he modifies his definition by saying: “tragedy is an

imitation, not of man but of action and life, of happiness and misfortune" (*Ibid*,p.13). "Imitation" is thus the representation of human activities reflecting his soul; an act that has a "thought" but the diameters of its thought expands beyond that of its model. Saving the life of a little girl from a burning house, for example, may be considered as a proof of bravery or duty. Recreation of the same acts through arts or in this case through "tragedy" will reflect a corner of human's spirit. This is what differentiates a real act from an imitated act. According to this assumption a history book is not a work of art even though it might describe various actions. It is a direct record of some events. "Poetry", Aristotle says, "deals with general truth", while history deals with "specific events." "The historian relates what happened, the poet what might happen" (*Ibid*,p.18).

The third and fourth points made in the passage are related to the structure and the size of tragedy; tragedy should be "complete" and of "certain length." We will examine these two characteristics later while discussing the construction of plot.

The next element that Aristotle mentions in the passage deals with the language used in tragedy and the way its texture should change from part to part. He says the language of tragedy should be "made pleasing for each part separately." In the following paragraph he enlightens his thought by saying "by language made pleasing" he means language which has rhythm, melody, and music. And by "separately for the parts" he means "some parts use only "meter" while others also have music." This indicates that the texture of the text of tragedy should be both divers and harmonious. The writer should in fact construct the harmony of his writing through the contrast he creates in its texture.

[Tragedy] "relies on acting not narration" Aristotle says. This refers to the way tragedy tells its story. On the contrary to epic that communicates its story through a narrator tragedy does it through acting or dramatic presentation. There is no middle person standing between the line of the story and the addressees. It is the acts of the characters that advance the narration not the words of a narrator.

The last point that the passage makes relates to the theme of tragedy, the kind of emotion that it should arouse. Aristotle believes tragedy should evoke fear and pity. It is through



fear and pity that purgation of the same emotions can be achieved. This is of course a conventional rule and in fact refers to what tragedy is all about; “we should not require from tragedy every kind of pleasure, but only its own peculiar kind.” Later on in the book Aristotle discusses the mood of tragedy in more details; it should have an unhappy ending and at the end the hero’s character should receive a serious flaw (*Ibid*, p.27).

Although the passage is short, it describes almost all the characteristics of tragedy (dramatic writing); it says what tragedy should imitate, how it should imitate and through what means it should do it. Aside from describing and defining the traits of tragedy, Aristotle also discusses the way tragedy functions and achieves its dramatic goal.

## **2.1 Four Elements of Dramatic Writing (Poetry)**

Aristotle considers six parts for tragedy: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Spectacle and Song. According to him “The plot is the first essential and the soul of a tragedy; character comes second...Thought is the third element...Diction is the fourth” (Aristotle, 1961,p.14). Aristotle discusses these four elements of the structure of tragedy with some detail because they are directly related to the “art” of “writing” tragedy. The last two elements have “least to do with writing tragedy,” they deal with the “performance” of tragedy, therefore, he does not analyze them in depth. In the last paragraph of chapter VI, he shows his interest on the “writing” aspect of tragedy by saying, “a tragedy [text] can achieve its effect even apart from the performance and the actors”( *Ibid*, p.15). He repeats the same statement two more times in *The Poetics*. Once while comparing tragedy with epic; “then again, tragedy can achieve its effect without any kind of gesture, just as the epic can” (*Ibid*,p.61). The second time when he discusses the structure of story; “the story should be so constructed that the events make anyone who hears the story shudder and feel pity without seeing the play” (*Ibid*, p.26). So the descriptions and definitions of tragedy in *The Poetics* are about the “writing” aspect of tragedy or more precisely the “poetry” aspect of tragedy. And in *The Poetic* the term “poetry” stands for “literature”. In chapter I, after describing “poetry” as “the art which imitates by means of words only”, Aristotle admits that there is no word in Greek for what we know today as “literature,”

therefore he uses the term “poetry” instead. This means that the analysis of “poetry” in *The Poetics* is in fact the analysis of “literature” at large, with a focus on the “writing” of tragedy and Epic.

### 2.1.1 Plot

Aristotle defines plot, which is “the most important element among all” as “the arrangement of incidents” (*Ibid*, p.13). To clarify this definition, he brings an example from painting. He says, “the most beautiful colors, laid on at random, give less pleasure than a black-and-white drawing” (*Ibid*, p.14) The “laid on at random” stands for a painting without any pattern. The plot of a story in this context is the pattern or the structure of its incidents in a way that they make a “picture.” Not only make a picture but a good picture. Aristotle presents a number of techniques for making this pattern. To begin with he suggests the writer lays out the outline of the story and then “fill it out with incidents.” He also recommends the writers to “visualize” the incidents as much as possible. Following these recommendations, he describes the first technique: making the plot around action, not person.

### 2.1.2 Action plot

Aristotle believes plot should be constructed around “action” not “person.” This is how plot can achieve “unity.” He says, one person performs many actions which do not combine into one “action,” and many things might happen to the same person that have no unity at all. Therefore, plot made around a person will become disarray and as a result unable to create emotion and thought. If plot is to have unity, it should be around action. He says even Homer who writes epic with a different nature of tragedy “seems to have perceived this.” Because in the *Odyssey* he did not include all that happened to Odysseus.... He built his plot around the one action which is called the “*Odyssey*.”

Aristotle concludes that all those who make “imitative art” should do the same; they should build plots of their stories around action (*Ibid*, p.17).

### **2.1.3 Three acts**

The second technique that Aristotle introduces to writers is “three acts.” While defining the word “complete” or “whole” in chapter VII, he writes:

We have established that a tragedy is the imitation of an action which is whole and complete, ... “Whole” means having a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning, while not necessarily following something else, is, by definition, followed by something else. The end on the contrary, follows something else by definition, either always or in most cases, but nothing else comes after it. The middle both itself follows something else and is followed by something else. (Aristotle, 1961, p. 16)

A “complete” act is then an act that has a beginning, a middle and an ending; in fact “three acts,” each must begin from somewhere and end somewhere else. The role of the first act in plot according to Aristotle is to “involve” the readers with the story and extends from the beginning to the part which immediately precedes the change to good or bad fortune. The role of the second and the third acts together is to “unravel” the story and it extends from where the change of fortune begins to the end (*Ibid*, p.36). So all the incidents happening before the change of fortune, both the incidents preceding the beginning of the play and the incidents within the play, make the “involvement,” the rest make the “unraveling.”

### **2.1.4 Reversal, Recognition and Suffering**

While describing the practice of historians and poets in chapter IX, Aristotle says, “poetry deals with general truth, history with specific events.” Aristotle then concludes that the writer should not relate actual events if he intends to explore the “general truth”,

but to relate such things as might or could happen in accordance with “probability” or “necessity” (*Ibid*, p.18).

To create “inevitable” and “probable” situations, he proposes two techniques: Reversal and Recognition. Reversal is a “change of the situation into its opposite” (*Ibid*, p.21). A situation that seems to develop in one direction suddenly develops in the reverse situation. In the terminology of screenwriting this change of situation is called “twist,” a new situation that “necessarily” pushes a routine act towards a new direction. Aristotle’s example for reversal is a scene from *Lynceus*, in which the hero is brought in to die, while Danaus who intends to kill him is following him. But in the end it is Danaus who dies and the hero who survives.

“Recognition” is “a change from ignorance to knowledge.” In his example for Recognition, Aristotle refers to a play in which the male character of the story, *Orestes*, recognizes *Iphigenia*, the female character, from a letter she sends to him.

Recognition and reversal are two dramatic tools with similar functions; they both breakdown the line of the story for the “change of fortune.” That means that they create “surprises” and also “suspense.” Their differences however are technical; the change in reversal occurs through a physical act, in recognition it happens through realization (*Ibid*, p.21). Aristotle says, reversal and recognition, are both “fully part of the plot and the action” and they “must accord with the probable or the inevitable” (*Ibid*, p.22). It is through this situation that a writer can “stir up pity and fear.”

Aside from “recognition” and “reversal,” Aristotle proposes the technique of “suffering.” He defines “suffering” as “a fatal or painful action like death on the stage, violent physical pain, wounds and everything of that kind” (*Ibid*, p.22). If the “tragic poet” aims to produce the kind of “pleasure” which results from “fear” and “pity,” “suffering” is a proper element to rely upon. In chapter XIV, he discusses a few situations that are most suitable for “suffering”: the terrible and pitiful incidents occurring between people who are friends, enemies, or neither (*Ibid*, p.27).

### 2.1.5 Unity of time, Length

Aristotle discusses the appropriate duration of time into which the plot of a tragedy should fit. In chapter V, while comparing tragedy with epic, he argues that tragedy should restrict itself as much as possible within the duration of one day or as he puts it in words, “one revolution of the sun or a little more” (*Ibid*, p.11). This means that all the accidents that form the plot should occur in a period of one day and one night. And if the story has an incident that happens beyond this period of time, it should stay out of the plot. It is interesting to know that the unity of space that more often has been considered as an Aristotelian technique, is not his. Aristotle has never mentioned unity of space in *The Poetics*.

Forming the plot within a proper length is another technique that the writers of tragedy should consider. Aristotle argues that the “nature” of action must set the limits for the plot. This means any length the plot gains is acceptable as long as it is not “contrary to the concept of drama” (*Ibid*, p.38) and as long as it “can easily be remembered” (*Ibid*, p.16). Aristotle himself likes “longer” plots because they “are always more beautiful.” Since *Oedipus Rex* is Aristotle favorite tragedy, one can assume that its length, a text of forty to fifty pages, stands for what he calls “longer” plot.

## 2.2 Epic

Aristotle describes epic in two ways, either directly or while talking about tragedy. The most information that one can get from *The Poetics* about epic comes from the second approach. From the comparisons he makes between the two genres of poetry in chapter III, we learn that there is no difference between epic and tragedy as far as their nature and their aims are concerned. They both imitate through the means of words and they both imitate what is “morally worthy.” Nevertheless, they are different in their method of narration. While tragedy expresses its story through action, more specifically through the acts of the characters, epic does it through narration, impersonation and a mixture of the

two. This technique gives a big advantage to epic over tragedy; because it enables epic to go far beyond the limits of tragedy to explore and express:

Tragedy cannot represent different parts of the action at the same time but only that part which is enacted upon the stage, whereas the epic, being narrative in form, can make different parts of the action come to a head simultaneously, so that these scenes, appropriate to the epic, increase the bulk of the poem. Thus the epic has an advantage which contributes to its grandeur, enables it to vary the story for the audience, and to illustrate it by diverse incidents. (*Ibid*, p.51)

There are other differences between the two genres of poetry. The span of time that each literary form adapts is different. While tragedy confines itself to “one revolution of the sun,” the time of epic is “unlimited.” This feature affects the length of epic and makes it longer than tragedy with more incidents and longer incidents. Like the length of tragedy, the length of epic faces a condition; it must be able “to grasp the whole, from beginning to end, as a unity” (*Ibid*, p.51). The two genres are also different in terms of the subject they employ. Tragedy always uses “serious” subjects; epic adapts both serious and funny themes.

Aside from these differences, epic and tragedy share many elements of dramatization, especially when it comes to constructing plot. Like tragedy, the plot of epic consists of three parts; the beginning, middle and ending. And depend on the dramatic information that the three acts hold, they are divided into two parts: the involvement and the unraveling (*Ibid*, p.36).

Epic is also concerned with one complete action as it is in the case of *Odyssey* and *Iliad* (*Ibid*, p.17). It requires reversals, recognitions, and scenes of suffering as well (*Ibid*, p.50). And like tragedy there are four types of epic; simple, complex, character and suffering.

Therefore, from the six techniques suggested by Aristotle for making plot, four of them are exercised similarly by both tragedy and epic; “unity of plot,” “three acts,” “reversal and recognition,” and “suffering.” The two genres, however, have different approaches

towards the two techniques of “unity of time” and “length.” And these two elements play very important roles in forming the dramatic language of each.

Aristotle discusses different types of plot in both tragedy and epic. According to him, episodic plots are the worse of all plots because they have no “probable or inevitable connections.” Aristotle dislikes also “double story” plots and believes “a good plot” must consist of a “single story” (*Ibid*, p.24). Among single story plots, he recognizes four types: simple, complex, suffering and character. The relationship between each of these types with “the change of fortune” in the story, defines their category. “Simple” plot, for example, is the type where the “change of fortune” occurs without recognition or reversal. In a “complex plot,” the change of fortune is accompanied either by recognition or reversal, or by both.

By outlining the patterns of plot in tragedy and epic as Aristotle views them, we have now established the needed reference for examining the plot structure of the other two narrative writings: the novel and the screenplay. We begin with plot in the novel.

### **2.3 Plot in Novel**

Since the time of *The Poetics* the definition of plot in dramatic writing has not changed at all. Plot is still “the arrangements of incidents” and it is to narrate a story sufficiently and convey its “thought” effectively. “Plot means the story line” and “Plotting concerns how to move characters in and out of your story. Plotting means what you do to keep the action going.” (Stern, 1991, p.174)

Aristotle’s suggested techniques for making plot have not changed either. Contemporary fiction writers still consider the use of “three acts” and “change of fortune” in forming the plot of their stories. There are new techniques, however, that Aristotle has not discussed them in *The Poetics*, like “Zigzag” which is a device to produce “tension within a single scene” (Stern, 1991, p.254). But the overall purpose of using those techniques is the same

as those of the classics. In the following we review the technique of plot making in novel.

### **2.3.1 Action Plot**

Like the plot of tragedy and epic, the plot of novel is also made around “action” not “person.” Even if the story is about a person, its plot should be formed around certain activities of the person aiming to convey a “thought.” The story of *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, which is about a man descended by accident to a different world, is made around those “actions” of Robinson that portray one thought, struggling to survive and find a way to go back home. As it is in the case of tragedy and epic, it is the “thought” behind the story which selects the adequate actions for the plot of a novel. If the “thought” is to convey a specific aspect of “man,” the stress will be put on the actions that reflect that side of his “problem.” If it is to express another idea, the “incidents” will be arranged in that direction. “Action” in this regard stands for all kinds of man’s behaviors, both motionless (in mind) and in motion (physical).

The term “action plot” however is used in contemporary novel to identify a specific type of fiction writing as well. “Action plots” is a “puzzle plot,” a type of plot that challenges the readers “to solve some sort of mystery” (Tobias, 1993, p.35). Science fiction, Westerns, Romances and Detective novels fall into this category. Apposite to “action plot” stands “plot of the mind” which “delve inward, into human nature and the relationships between people.” According to Ronald B. Tobias, in “weighing the mental (plot of mind) against physical (action plot),” the former will dominate to some degree (*Ibid*, p.35).

### **2.3.2 Three acts, Change of Fortune and Suffering**

Aristotle’s definition of “three acts” in classical dramatic writings is still valid in contemporary fiction writing. The plot of the mainstream contemporary novels like those of tragedy and epic consist of three movements: the beginning, the middle, and the



ending. The beginning, commonly called the *setup*, initiates the action and presents the problem that must be solved. It also introduces the characters and their goals. The middle part develops dramatic tension through creating conflictive situations; the characters run into problems to solve them and the problems resist. In the terminology of contemporary novel writings the second act is called *complication* or *development*. The third act pictures the logical outcome of all the events in the *setup* and *development*. It is at this stage that the “problem” set at the “beginning” of the story gets solved; the characters achieve their goals and they resolve their dramatic truth. That is why the ending is known as the “*resolution*.”

It seems nothing has changed since the time of Aristotle in regard to “three acts” and its role in the plot of dramatic writing. The only change is the names that identify the three parts.

The plot has to get going early (*rising action*); once readers understand the situation, something else has to happen to keep things going (*complication*); and all this leads to something (*climax*) where things change (*reversal*). (Stern, 1991, p. 137)

“Climax” is Aristotle’s “turn of fortune.” It is at this point that the storyline suddenly shifts to a different direction. Jams N. Frey, a well known novelist and novel instructor symbolically calls the “climax” of a story, “goal”, as he calls the rest, “the flight of the arrow.” (Frey, 2000, p. 85) Frey argues that all the incidents happening in the story are set to take the readers to this point. Aristotle introduces two techniques to create climax: reversal and recognition. The driving force behind these two techniques can be either of “probable” or “inevitable” nature. “Probable” in this premise is an optional situation that involves only plot not characters. This means that the personal intention of the characters has no role in producing dramatic energy. In other words, characters’ destinies are decided and imposed on them by the force of plot not their own will. In the contemporary fiction writings, the desire of characters is recognized as a source of creating dramatic situations. And that has resulted to a wide range of new relationships between the elements of dramatic writing. The dynamic behind many of the adventure novels, for example is constituted in personal curiosity and sense of immediate attraction driven by

the characters' will, not in the mood of suspense and surprise imposed by the acts of "reversal" or "recognition." Change of fortune, however, is still one of the most practiced dramatic techniques in contemporary fiction writing.

As it was in the case of epic, the use of "suffering" mood in the plot of contemporary fiction writings is optional and is decided by the dramatic goal of the text. While a novelist may create a painful situation in a story to provoke certain kind of emotions, he may set up different dramatic conditions to stir up other feelings in another story. James N. Frey prefers "struggle" to "suffer" in his novels. He argues that the story in which the characters suffer, creates "passive" moods, because the characters do nothing to solve their problems: "characters must struggle if you are to have drama" (Frey, 1987, p.70). "Suffering" thus is not a permanent part of plotting in contemporary narrative writings, although many novelists still use it.

### 2.3.3 Time and Length

In her well known essay *"Notes on the Superposition of Temporal Modes in the Works of Art,"* Micheline Sauvage distinguishes four levels of "temporality" in any artwork. She symbolizes them by T1, T2, T3 and T4. T1 according to her is the history of the work, the age of the work, and the time that it was made in. T2 is the duration in which a work of art achieves its structure and the rhythm by which it develops. T3 is the "time evoke"; the time (day, night, midday, afternoon..) that the artwork induces in the spectators. T4 is the "time invoke," the feeling which rises up after watching the artwork-the feeling about its era. Micheline argues that the three levels of T1, T3 and T4 are equally perceivable in all works of art. However, level 2 emerges different in "spatial" arts and the rest of the arts (musical, dramatic and narrative). According to Sauvage, this is due to their different usage of time. While "spatial" arts do not use time directly to reveal themselves, musical, dramatic and narrative arts construct their artistic time in actual time. In this sense, novels vary in T2. Some like Ernest Hemingway's, *The Old man and the Sea*, needs less time to fully express itself. Some like *Jean Christophe*, the splendid work of *Roman Roland*, are

very long, therefore demand more time. As Aristotle mentions in his definition of “length” in tragedy, the factor determining T2 or in fact the length of a narrative writing and in this case the length of a novel, is the needed balance between the “concept” and the scope of the work; the time the story needs to fully develop. This dramatic condition hasn’t changed since the time of *The Poetics*. James N. Frey aligns the full development of the story with the “growth” of the character:

*Aristotle* said in *The Poetics* that the length of a drama should be such that the hero passes “by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness, or from happiness to misfortune.” Twenty-three centuries later, Egri says the same thing when he insists that a character should “grow from pole to pole.” A coward becomes brave, a lover becomes an enemy, a saint becomes a sinner-this is growth from pole to pole (Frey, 1987, p. 75).

Aside from “unity of time” which was a special trait of “tragedy” lasting for centuries until Shakespeare and other tragic writers of his time invalidated it, the span of time or T3 in all other narrative writings including novel, play, screenplay and Aristotle’s epic is not limited to any conditions. Like the writers of epic, contemporary novelists can expend the spectrum of time in their works as much as they need it. Some travel through time as far as their imaginations go, some confine their works within a small chunk of time. Some science-fiction novelist even travel to the future which is a concept not known to Aristotle. The relationship between T3 and the plot of a story is thus based on the same regulations that were set by the classic storytellers.

Almost all the techniques that Aristotle distinguishes in the plots of tragedy and epic are present in the plot of contemporary novel; plotting around action is still a common rule in the contemporary novel writing, as well as “three acts” and the “change of fortune.” Employing “suffering” moods to evoke “fear” and “pity” and the length of “time” are still optional, as they were in the plot of epic. And like Aristotle, the contemporary novel instructors have certain rules and conventions to suggest to the beginning writers: “don’t try to tell too many stories at once...” and “don’t write about things you don’t know

about..." and "don't give your characters names that are phonetically similar..." (Jerome, 1991, p.65).

## **2.4 Plot in Screenplay**

Twenty six hundred years ago Aristotle wrote: "In the process of writing, the dramatist must first lay out an outline of the story, even if he has invented it, and then fill it out with incident" (Aristotle, 1961, p.35). Today, the screenplay instructors still repeat what he has stated, although in different words. Alex Epstein, a scriptwriter and script adviser, asks the scriptwriters to draw a sketch of their plot first and then develop it in process (Epstein, Alex. 2002, p.63). Syd Field, a renowned Hollywood script instructor, advises the screenwriters to visualize what they put on the paper (Field, 1984, p.193). Aristotle also asks "dramatists" to "visualize the incidents" of their plays as much as they can before writing them (Aristotle, 1961, p.36).

Aristotle's techniques to build the plot of tragedy are valid for constructing the plot of screenplay as well. "Action", like in tragedy, is "the lifeblood of" screenplay (Seger, 1987, p.182). Screenwriters employ three acts and change of fortune as well. We will examine the use of these techniques in the plot of screenplay.

### **2.4.1 Three Acts, Change of fortune, Suffering**

The technique of three acts is one of the most discussed techniques in the study of the plot of the screenplay. Syd Field designs the entire of his book, *The Screenwriter's Workbook*, based on a "paradigm," demonstrating the structure of plot in his favorite screenplay with the exact spots of its three acts. According to Field screenplay has "a definite structure, a beginning, middle, and end" (Field, 1984, p.23). The beginning corresponds to "Act I," the middle to "Act II," and the ending to "Act III" (*Ibid*, p.27). Linda Seger, the author of *Making a Good Script Great*, vividly pictures the role of "three act" technique in the structure of all dramatic writings including screenplay:

Dramatic composition, almost from the beginning of drama, has tended toward the three-act structure. Whether it's a Greek tragedy, a five-act Shakespearean play, a four-act dramatic series, or a seven-act Movie-of-Week, we still see the basic three-act structure: beginning, middle, and end- or *setup*, *development*, and *resolution* (Seeger, 1987, p.19).

"Change of fortune" also seems to be a permanent technique in the plotting of screenplay. Script instructors use different terms to identify this technique: "turning point," "twist," "plot point" and so on. All these terms refer to a dramatic shift that keeps the "action moving." Without twists, the story is "completely linear", Linda Seger, says. (*Ibid*, p. 28)

Script instructors generally agree that there should be two turning points in a three-act plot, one at the beginning of act II, and one at the beginning of act III. Syd Field marks the spots of these two acts on the length of the screenplay; the first one happens around page 30, with the second one coming around page 90, which is in fact 30 pages before the end of the screenplay. The number of turning points in a screenplay may exceed two; many small surprises and "obstacle" may play as turning points in screenplay.

The use of suffering mood in the plot of the screenplay is optional as it is in the plot of novel. Many scriptwriters employ this tool, some directly some indirectly. In the screenplay *Apocalypse Now*, the group of the soldiers who are appointed to assassinate Colonel Walter E. Kurtz become fearful as they go deep through the jungles of Vietnam. This is an indirect use of suffering mood. Rose De Witt, one of the main characters of the screenplay *Titanic*, suffers after the death of her lover Jack. This is also an indirect use of this mood. In the screenplay, *The Silence of the Lambs*, the technique of "suffering" is used directly. The girl, who is abducted by a psychotic killer, keeps suffering throughout the screenplay. This feeling mixed with a sense of suspense, dominant the mood of the story. Although the use of "suffering" technique is not essential in forming the plot of screenplay, it is the most frequently used mood by scriptwriters.

### 2.4.2 Time, length

Like novel, screenplay has more freedom in regard to the use of space and time than play (“Time” in this respect stands for T3). Time and space in all dramatic writings are always tied to a live event, and since play due to its nature cannot hold many events, it cannot employ variety of “times” and “spaces.” Whereas screenplay, like novel, again due to its nature, can keep moving from place to place and from time to time. What determines the use of time and space in screenplay is the intention of the writer. The screenplay *Intolerance* written by Griffith, for example, travels through centuries and over the continents. On the other hand, the screenplay *Rope*, written by Alfred Hitchcock, confines the diameters of its space and the spectrum of its time within the rooms of an apartment and two consecutive hours.

Opposite to the free relationship between screenplay and T3 (time) the relationship between screenplay and T2 (the length of the screenplay) is very restricted. Based on a convention set by “film market” or in fact by film viewers for whom the screenplay is originally written, the plot of screenplay should be constructed within a limit of 100 to 120 pages. This is equal to two hours of screening, approximately one page for a minute. Anything over that, according to Alex Epstein, gives the producers, those who buy screenplay, “one more excuse to reject it” (Epstein, 2002, p. 207).

The restricted length of screenplay obviously affects the pattern of its plot. If Syd Field obsessively looks for the precise page numbers of his exemplified screenplay to register the outline of its plot points (plot point one should happen around page 30, for example), it is due to this aspect. By trying to find sufficient spot for “three acts” and “turning points” on the restricted line of screenplay, screenwriters and screenplay instructors, including Syd, try to make a harmony among all the techniques of plot making in order to build a dramatically effective screenplay. And that has resulted to a pattern of plotting that is exclusive to screenplay.

### 2.4.3 Plot in screenplay *Titanic*

Plot in screenplay *Titanic*, written by James Cameron, is a good example for “plot in screenplay.” *Titanic* contains 310 scenes, from which a considerable number (35 scenes at the beginning and 8 scenes at the end) do not belong to plot as Aristotle defines plot; they are made in documentary style as an introduction to the story; showing the sunken Titanic and also introducing the narrator of the story Rose DeWitt Bukater. From the remaining scenes (the scenes that belong to plot), a large number are of “fill out” scenes. However, there are scenes that are basic for the structure of plot. From them we have assembled a draft to portray the outline of plot in screenplay *Titanic* (Appendix 1, p. 127).

The outline carries almost all the main elements of plot making in screenplay: action, three acts, length, suffering, probability, necessity, and change of fortune. Action, which is in fact the bedrock for all the other elements, runs throughout the story from the beginning to the end.

The plot of *Titanic* has also three parts; the beginning, the middle and the ending. The beginning part starts when Jack is introduced to the readers and ends where he and Rose fall in love. Falling in love is the beginning of the second part which ends when Rose chooses Jack over her life and jumps out of the saving boat to the sinking ship. The third part begins from there to the end. The beginning part introduces the main characters of the story: Jack, Rose, and Cal. It also sets up two conflictive situations; one through introducing different social classes, poor and rich, and the other through a triangle of love: Jack, Rose and Cal (Rose’s fiancé). The middle part develops two obstacles, one on the way of the lovers (Rose’s fiancé) and the other on the way of ship, the iceberg, which is in fact the “turn of fortune” for everybody. The ship colliding with the iceberg is a sub-plot joining the main plot to create more tension. Now the passengers are struggling for their lives, Jack and Rose struggling both for their lives and their loves. The two lines meet each other at the point that Rose leaves the save boat. This is the climax of the plot. In the resolution part the lovers finally reach each other although their time to be together



is short and chaotic. The ship also sinks in the third part, and the bad guy (Cal) standing in a saving boat fights with those who cling to the sides in the water.

The plot of *Titanic* creates and advances its events through the elements of “probability” and “necessity.” By the mean of “probability,” love enters into the plot (Rose decides to commit suicide), and then through “necessity” it continues (it is love, it has to continue). Suffering mood shows itself throughout the story. It is reflected in the suffering of the poor in the third class, the suffering of two lovers who cannot reach each other, the suffering of all the people on board when the ship begins to sink, specially those who are in the third class with all its doors locked, and finally the suffering of Rose after the death of Jack.

## 2.5 Conclusion

All three major narrative writings, play, novel, and screenplay, consider plot as the most important element of story telling. The major components or tools of plot making (action, three acts, change of fortune, suffering mood, time, and space) in all three disciplines are also the same with similar functions. The way each discipline employs some of the tools of plot making, however, is different. In regard to screenplay this difference is most noticeable in length; the length of screenplay is restricted to 100 to 120 pages. This restriction affects the placement of some of the other elements on the plotline; three acts and plot point for instance, have almost fixed spot in plot of screenplay, therefore, to some extent predictable. This is the only difference that one can distinguish in regard to the structure of plot in novel and screenplay.



## Chapter 3

(Character)

### 3. Character in Tragedy and Epic

According to Aristotle, plot is the first essential element of tragedy and character comes next. Aristotle supports this statement by identifying the relationship between “man” and “action” and its affect on the construction of a story; it is the “man” or in dramatic terms “character” and his “thought” that are the “natural causes of action.” But at the same time, it is through “actions” that man “succeeds or fails,” “finds happiness or the reverse.” Therefore “action” comes first and “character,” which is a “by-product” of “action,” is “subsidiary” to it (Aristotle, 1961, p.14). Aristotle criticizes the poets who focus their work upon “character.” He says “plot cannot achieve unity merely by being about one person” (*Ibid*, p.17) because tragedy is not about individuals; it is about truth hidden behind the actions. In a strong statement he says, “Without action there could be no tragedy, whereas a tragedy without characterization is possible” (*Ibid*, p.14).

Based on this view, Aristotle analyses the role of character in tragedy. When he discusses the type of characters which are suitable for tragedy or epic, it is due to the role that the characters can play in the construction of plot. When he describes the kind of treatment that they should receive by the artists, it is also due to this point of view. The analysis of character in *The Poetics* is in fact the analysis of the relationship between character and plot.

### 3.1 Three types of characterization

Aristotle argues that “character” should be one of the three types: either “superior”, or “inferior” or “the same” (*Ibid*, p.5). Aristotle makes this distinction in regard to the dramatic qualities each type holds and its suitability to the action. An ordinary act requests an ordinary character and a superior act demands a superior character. That is why “tragedy imitates men who are better, comedy imitates men who are worse than we know them today”( *Ibid*, p.6). Since the nature of “action” is tied to the nature of the “man” who performs it, it is through being “superior” or “inferior” or “the same”, that the character finds its place in the plot or in fact in the action. Aristotle brings several examples from painting for these three types of situation. Polygnotus, he says, represent men better than life in his paintings, Pauson represents them as worse, and Dionysius makes them like life. In “poetry” Aristotle mentions Homer who represents “men better than those we know” in his writings, Cleophon who makes them like those we know in life, and Hegemon who makes them worse.

This classification of character is not related to the technical skills and abilities of the artists who present them, but to the way the “man” is expressed in “action.” It is the quality of the action in fact that classifies the character not the way it is presented. Aristotle, however, does not underestimate the importance of the technical skills in the presentation of the artworks. In chapter XXV, while inspecting two kinds of errors that the artists may commit, what he calls “Intrinsic” and “Incidental Flaws,” he says, “It is a lesser fault not to know that a hind has no horns than to make a bad picture of it” (*Ibid*, p.56). Thus, the technical skill is important but “characterization” is not conditioned by it.

#### 3.1. 1 Aims of Characterization

Aristotle believes that “characterization” should meet four qualities or as he says four “aims.” He uses the word “good” for the first quality. “Good” character is the one who

through his words and actions brings out a “moral choice.” If the acts and the words of a character end up to no dramatic decision that character is not presented “good.” Same applies to all the characters representing different social classes and genders, men, women, free, slaves, etc. In this regard Aristotle says, “even a woman or a slave can be good” (*Ibid*, p. 30).

Second quality, the character must portray his/her “appropriateness” to his or her type; his words and actions should match his type. If the character is a man, he has to do certain things that suit a man. If she is a woman she has to fully represent a woman. Aristotle says, “it is not appropriate for a woman to be manly or clever speaker.” Women are not remarkable lecturers therefore, it is not appropriate to develop them in that character. As an example for “unsuitable and inappropriate” characterization, he refers to “the lament of Odysseus in the Scylla and the speech of Melanippe” (*Ibid*, p.30).

The third quality is to be “true to life.” Here, Aristotle emphasizes that what he means by “being true to life” is different from “being good” or “true to type.” If a character is destined to be a “bad guy,” he should be realistically characterized as “bad,” if he is meant to be a “good guy,” he should be realistically represented “good.” “Menelaus” the character of the Orestes, Aristotle says, “provides an example of a character” who is not “true” because he is “unnecessarily” portrayed “evil.”

The fourth quality is consistency in characterization. The character should be always consistent in his traits. His dialogues and actions should provide a coherent personality of him. For example, Aristotle says, Iphigenia in *Iphigenia at Aulis* shows inconsistency because “her supplication is quite unlike the character she displays later” (*Ibid*, p.30). The acts and the dialogues of the character should not contradict each other. Even if the character is meant to display inconsistency, “he must be consistence in his inconsistency” Aristotle says.

The above four qualities are the four “aims” that the writer of a tragedy should consider while building his characters. There is one more thing to be added to these qualities and that is the “name” of the characters. Aristotle argues that since poetry deals with “general

truth,” it is better the poets choose typical names for their characters. In this regard, he criticizes the writers who “cling to names of historical persons” (*Ibid*, p.18). He says they do so because people are used to well-known names and it is easier for them to believe their story. However, he mentions that there are poets who don’t use well-known names and yet people enjoy their stories.

Furthermore, Aristotle makes two other points in regard to characterization. One is the relationship between the personality of the writer and that of the character he creates. Aristotle believes emotional writers can describe emotional characters better (*Ibid*, p.31, 34). The other point is about the appropriate type of character for tragedy. Aristotle argues that those who “have done terrible things” make the best characters for tragedy (*Ibid*, p. 25). Aside from these two remarks that are not directly related to the general techniques of characterization, the techniques that we examined above, there is no other reference to character in *The Poetics*. The picture that one can draw from all these is that character, whoever she or he is and whatever he or she represents, should perfectly match plot (his acts and dialogues). This is the essence of all the techniques that Aristotle presents for the characterization.

### 3.2 Character in Novel

The relationship between character and plot in novel, like that of the play, is organic and reciprocal. And that is not of any surprise of course. Both novel and play are storytellers and a story cannot exist without a character, as a “character” cannot live outside of a story. James N. Frey believes characters are to novelist what lumber is to a carpenter and what bricks are to a bricklayer, “characters are the stuff out of which a novel is constructed” (Frey, 1987, p. 1).

Tobias compares the connection between the two with the “parts of a car engine” which are “inseparable” (Tobias, 1993, p.49). Henry James relates character to the incidents that make a story and concludes that “character is the determination of incident” and incident is “the illustration of character” (*Ibid*, p.49). Aristotle also agrees with all these when he

says, “without action there could be no tragedy” and also “plot is the arrangement of incidents.” Dramatic “actions” and “incidents” without “character” do not take place. Aristotle, however, makes a distinction between “character” and “characterization.” He says, “tragedy without characterization is possible.” In other words it is possible to make tragedy with some non-characterized figures. Frey echoes exactly the same thought, although in a different language; it is possible to make any novel with some characters, but in order to have a “good novel,” the characters should be “vivid.” “If you can’t create characters that are vivid in the reader’s imagination, you can’t create a damn good novel,” Frey says (Frey, 1987, p.1). And how novelists create vivid characters is a question that Marc McCutcheon asks from six contemporary novelists. In the following, we will examine his questions and the responds of the six novelists.

### **3.2.1 Characterization in novel**

In his book, *Building Believable Characters*, Marc McCutcheon interviews six contemporary novelists with a central question: “how to create great characters.” The responses that the novelists provide to his questions reveal some of the techniques of characterization in novel which nevertheless resemble those of Aristotle. We give a summary of this interview taken from the pages 6 to 31 of the book. The first question is about “planning” to create character. McCutcheon asks, “What sort of planning goes into the creation of your characters? The answers are varied in terms of the choice of the words, but they all echo one thing which is in fact Aristotle’s fourth advice when he talks about the “aims” of characterization: consistency. DeNoux says, he makes a brief biography of each character with all the pertinent details; physical descriptions, psychology, mannerisms, background information, outer and inner motivations. Searls adds to this list date of birth and education. Harrison says, if he has trouble with a character not coming to life, he stops writing and does a “character sketch” (McCutcheon, 1996, p. 9). All the points that the writers make relate to the clearness and consistency of the character’s picture.

McCutcheon's other question is about the names that the writers choose for their characters. Quarles says he chooses the names that fit the stories, whether "they be humorous, catchy, flowery or dramatic." Skye says, a character doesn't click for him until the name is right. She says, a name can convey so many subtle connotations. Name of the character for DeNoux is "a matter of feel." He says, the name either sounds right for the character or it doesn't (*Ibid*, p.11). Aristotle conveys similar concept about character in chapter IX, when he refers to comedy writers who choose "typical names" for their characters and "tragedians" who "cling to the names of historical persons." Again, the name of the characters, both according to classics and contemporary storytellers, is perceived in relation to the role it may play in the plotting of a story.

### **3.2.2 Through Description**

McCutcheon's other questions are related to the ways the novelists introduce their characters; the devices that they use to help the readers visualizing a character: description, action, dialogue or other things. DeNoux says he believes physical description is very important. Quarles agrees with him and says he prefers to describe the person's size more than anything else-nice muscles, smooth skin, etc. He says the description, however, is better to get shape in "process." For example, if you want to show your character breaks a man's jaw in a fight in chapter thirteen, you describe his powerful arms in chapter two. Skye says she feeds in key details only because "it is the telling detail that convinces, not a mound of raw description." Ames says it's often better to do physical descriptions indirectly through suggestion and avoid creating a complete photo of the characters. The problem with making the character too clear for the readers is that they just might not like her. You should give them just enough to shape their ideals.

Ames says to describe his characters he uses a device called "other-reflector characterization." With this device instead of the author's voice conveying description, a character describes another character. In the following line for example, he says, a

character describes the look of his friend; “Hon, I swear if I had your looks, I wouldn’t be paying income tax.” Skye believes secondary characters are better for this technique because the information they convey is usually more convincing. She says it is more of a convention that secondary characters won’t lie to us.

Ames mentions another effective characterization trick, “dossier.” He says “dossier” is mainly used in mysteries and espionage, where a character’s resume is laid out right on the page and studied by the reader and another character.

McCutcheon then asks about the role of the traits that the writers give to their characters. This is the same technique that Aristotle also emphasizes on when he mentions Homer’s characters that “none without a trait.” In response to McCutcheon’s question DeNoux says it is good to give a “memorable” trait to the characters that the writer can keep showing it to the readers. As an example he refers to James Lee Burke, author of the Dave Robicheux series of crime novels, who is a master of centering on physical traits to reveal character. Skye believes it is good to find the physical elements that convey interior attitudes of the character, for example stiff posture, shifty eyes, thin lips, trembling fingers. She says the key is the quality of the descriptions, not the quantity.

On the question of “likeable” or “dislikable” traits for “good guys” and “bad guys,” DeNoux says he gives his heroes at least one unlikable trait to make them imperfect. He adds that he rarely gives his villains any likeable traits. Ames says she is less likely to give her good guys undesirable traits, but sometimes she gives her bad guys desirable traits. She says readers like this treatment.

What about “weaknesses” in characters, McCutcheon asks. Ames says, a completely invulnerable hero would be a dramatic failure because there would be no suspense when he or she was in danger. Searls says, if a character has no vulnerabilities, why write the book? Even Superman has vulnerability and that is his naïveté. Quarles says if there is no vulnerability there is no believability and if a character cannot be defeated, then there’s no story. Harrison agrees with everybody and says the readers cannot identify with a

“perfect” character. She adds, it is “that identification that draws the reader into the story” (*Ibid*, p. 16).

### 3.2.3 Through Action

“Action” or in fact “describing a character in action” is also discussed in the interview and receives similar response from everybody. Which one is more effective, “telling about” a character, or “showing the character in action”, McCutcheon asks. DeNoux says, “showing” is a basic rule of all fiction because personality traits can be easily revealed in action. Skye argues that action lets the reader make the discovery and the result is far more persuasive than if the writer made a flat statement. Harrison says “show” works the same way of life, you learn about kayaking by doing it than by reading it. To extend the discussion about “character in action,” here we insert James N. Frey’s thoughts about “conflict” which is a device to motivate “character” for “action.”

Frey begins chapter two of his book, *How to Write a Damn Good Novel*, with this phrase: “The three greatest rules of dramatic writing: Conflict! Conflict! Conflict!” (Frey, 1987, p. 27). He explains that a character’s response to obstacles, barriers, and conflict individualizes him, proves his characterization, and makes him real and distinct in the reader’s mind. Frey later adds, characters must struggle if we want to have drama. Because it is through struggle that the readers forget themselves and get “completely absorbed into the character’s world” (*Ibid*, p.70). To show how lack of conflict makes the characters “flat, dull, and lifeless,” Frey “carefully” constructs a scene. Due to the image that this scene can create in regard to “characterization” and its opposite situation, we will copy the whole scene.

“Good morning,” he said sleepily.

“Good morning,” she said.

“Breakfast ready?”

“No. What would you like?”

“He considered. “How about ham and eggs?”



"Okay," she said, agreeably. "How do you want your eggs?"

"Sunny-side up."

"Okey-dokey. Toast? I've got some honey wheat bread. Makes wonderful toast."

"I'll give it a try."

"Okey-dokey. How do you like your toast?"

"Golden brown."

"Butter?"

"Hmmm-okay."

"Jam?"

"Fine."

He sat down and read the paper while she made the breakfast.

"Anything in the paper?" she asked as she worked.

"The Red Sox lost a doubleheader last night."

"Too bad."

"Now they're eight games out of first place."

"Terrible. What are you going to do today?"

"I don't know, haven't thought about it. How about you?"

"The grass needs cutting."

"I'll do it."

"After you cut the grass, let's go to the park, have a picnic lunch."

"Okay....."

(*Ibid*, p. 28)

Right after the exemplified scene Frey poses this question; "what do you feel as you read the scene?" And he himself answers, "Boredom, no doubt." The reason the scene is boring is its lack of conflict, he argues. The characters do nothing to show their colors.

They have shown the readers through their actions what they are inside. That is why they are flat and lifeless. Frey then discusses some types of conflicts involving the character, such as inner conflict and different patterns of dramatic conflict: static, jumping, and slowly rising.

### 3.2.4 Through Dialogue

McCutcheon's other key question in his interview with six contemporary novelists is about "dialogue," a device that can be used both to "tell" about the character and also to "show the character in action." What are some of the tricks you use to reveal character through dialogue? McCutcheon asks. "Show-emotions through the words themselves", Skye response. By that she means "broken sentences, muttering, stammering, etc." Harrison believes through "catchwords and phrases, certain pauses, emotional responses" a writer can reveal character. Quarles says he gives a character some identity through his dialogue. As an example he says he may have character A using "dern" and character B using "darn." One character, he says, say, "Lordy, Lordy" a lot, whereas another, when excited, will say, "hot damn!"

It is good to remember ourselves that the "dialogue" that the writers share their thoughts through, is the type that concerns the building of character, and that is different from the "dialogue" which functions as one of the main "elements" of storytelling in novel. The former is more involved with the personality of character, the later deals with the personality of the story. We will examine the later "dialogue" in chapter five.

### 3.2.5 Types of Characters in Novel

In his well-known book *Character and the Novel*, W. J. Harvey identifies four kinds of characters in novel: Protagonists, Background characters (Choric), Ficelle, and Card. Protagonists are the characters whose motivation and history are most fully established.

They engage our responses more fully and steadily, “they evoke our beliefs, sympathies and revulsions. In a sense they are what the novel exists for; it exists to reveal them” (Harvey, 1965, p.56).

Background characters exist simply to establish the density of society in which the protagonists move. They are in the story not to define a character, but to define an environment, a theme, or a mode of response. They allow a moment of intensity and depth, but they may be almost entirely anonymous. “They may be merely useful cogs in the mechanism of the plot; collectively they may establish themselves as a chorus to the main action” (Ibid, p. 56).

Ficelles are more individualized than background character and exist in the novel primarily to set off, contrast with, dramatize, and engage the protagonists. “like the protagonist he is ultimately a means to an end rather than an end in himself” (Ibid, p. 58).

Cards are also secondary or supporting characters. They are in the novel to illuminate the world of the protagonists. Harvey calls them “cards” because they are often odd or outrageous. They are “often comic and pathetic at the same time” (Ibid, p. 60).

Jerome Stern the author of *Making Shapely Fiction*, adds two more types of characters to Harvey’s list: “absent characters and “minor characters.” Absent character is the character who is not directly present in the story, but his influence on the others is so strong that they keep talking about him. Since “absent character” is built through the dialogues of the other characters, it can be placed under the same title.

By “minor characters” Stern means animals; “Goofs, worms, slugs, creeps, twerps, bruisers, etc.” He believes minor characters are “extraordinary” important in the story. “They are filled with life and are vividly remembered” (Stern, 1991, p. 98). She says. But since minor characters tend to appear briefly, they must be established strongly and clearly, and they must be invested with traits that are both distinctive and recognizable (Ibid, p. 99).

To end this section, we return to McCutcheon’s interview with six contemporary novelists. One of the questions that he puts forward is related to “character growth.” He

asks, "Must a protagonist change in some way at the end of a story?" All the participants respond positively. Ames refers to Aristotle's "recognition and reversal" in this regard and says, "it is human need to see moral progress in life" (McCutcheon, 1996p.19). Searls says, the protagonist must either change or learn something about himself, or "why write the novel?" He also mentions the fact that "novels are parables, after all." DeNoux echoes the same thought by saying, "no change, why go through the trouble?" He adds that this change can be subtle; the protagonist should learn something from the ordeal. He says, "that is a basic rule" (Ibid, p. 20).

These are the most common techniques for "building believable characters" in novel. They are developed throughout time and in accordance with the nature of novel. Their dimensions might be slightly different in detail from those of tragedy and epic. But in general, they follow similar principles; all want to present "characters" as effective as possible, no matter if the characters are "superior", "inferior" or "the same."

### **3.3 Character in Screenplay**

Creating a "good," "memorable," "distinctive," "fresh," and "dimensional" character is a dramatic value that any script instructor emphasizes on. They all believe good characterization is essential to the success of a screenplay because it is through the character that the readers get "emotionally" and "intellectually" connected to the story. "Good character is the heart and soul and nervous system of your screenplay. It is through your characters that the viewers experience emotions, through your characters that they are touched" (Field, 1984, p. 54). Field goes that far about the role of character in screenplay to say that without character there will be no screenplay: "without character you have no action; without action, no conflict; without conflict, no story; without story, no screenplay" (Ibid, p. 54).

Linda Seger believes character impinges on the story and "dimensionalizes" it. She says, "Most stories are relatively simple, their beginning, middle, and ending can be told in a

few words (Stern, 1991, p.149). It is the character that moves it in new directions and makes it compelling.

Like that of the novel and play the process of building and developing a character in screenplay begins with visualization. The screenplay instructors advise the writers to “get to know” their characters as much as they can before putting them in a story. Syd Field believes when a writer creates characters he must know them “inside” and “out,” he must know their hopes, their dreams and fears, their likes and dislikes. William Packard the author of *The Art of Screenwriting* suggests the writer puts himself inside each character so he can experience the story line from the character’s point of view. As an example he refers to Alvin Sargent, the writer of the screenplay *Paper Moon*, who puts his characters in a restaurant, at home, in bed at night, lost in Alaska, and so on to get a knowledge of his mannerism (Packard, 1987, p. 57).

After visualizing and getting to know “inside” and “outside” of the characters, the writer should record the information he has gathered about them. The common way to approach registering the identity of the characters is through making “biography.” Similar to the writers of novel and play, the screenplay writers open a file for each of their characters. Some list major elements of a character’s life on small cards, some write extensive outlines, some draw the profiles of their imaginary characters, some use pictures from magazines to help them see what their characters look like. The written information in the file includes the names of the characters, their place of birth, their ages (when the story begins), where they went to school, what they majored in, what their fathers did for living, their relationship with their moms, their relationship with the other members of the family, their looks, their habits, their hobbies etc. The next step is to translate this information into the building of characters. There are several techniques, more or less similar to those of the novel and play for this purpose. Below we will examine them.

### 3.3.1 What makes a good Character

Syd Field believes four elements are needed for a “good characterization.” “dramatic-need”, “view point”, “change”, and “attitude”. Field defines “dramatic need” as what character wants to win, gain, get, or achieve during the course of the screenplay. “Stake” is another term that some novelists and screenwriters use for “dramatic need.” We will examine this element in chapter four (thought).

“View Point” is the way a character *sees* the world. Field believes when a writer understands and defines his character’s point of view then creating a good character is at reach. Because those who don’t have “point of view” simply react. In drama characters should “act” not “react.”

“Change” is what novelists and playwrights call “growth.” By the end of the screenplay, at least one of the characters, usually the protagonist changes and “grows.” He learns something that he didn’t know at the beginning of the story. “Change” has a process; it begins from ignorance and ends to “recognition.”

Field believes knowing about the “attitude” of the characters allows the screenwriters add “dimension” to their characters; no matter if the attitude is positive, negative, superior, inferior, critical or naïve. He asks the screenwriters to describe their characters in “terms of attitude.”

In order to develop these four characteristics, scriptwriters use many of the same techniques that novelists and playwrights use: description, dialogue, action, dossier and “other-reflector characterization.”

### 3.3.2 Through Description

The building of any character in screenplay begins with his or her physical description, his look, his clothes, his gender, his age and so on. Since film is a visual medium and screenplay is its “visual” story told on the paper, the descriptions of characters in

screenplay are short and condense; a full description is the job of camera and sound recording systems. Syd Field believes the descriptions of characters in screenplay do not need to be specific. A general picture of the character through four sentences is enough (Field, 1984, p. 81). As an example he refers to the screenplay *The Wild Bunch*, in which Pike Bishop (William Holden) is described as a “not unhandsome, leather-faced man in his early 40’s. A thoughtful, self-educated top gun with a penchant for violence who is afraid of nothing except the changes in himself and those around him.” Field says “that is a good character description”, because it is “brief”, “lucid”, and “to the point.”

Since settings can reveal many things about character, his attitudes, hobbies, jobs, and so on, describing a set is a way of describing the character’s personality. Placing a man in a casino, for example, can suggest many things about his individuality. A man who drives an old model car and a driver who drives a motorcycle project different characteristics about their personalities. Description, either of the character or the set he is related to, is an important tool in presenting characters in screenplay.

In the introduction part of the screenplay *Titanic*, James Cameron uses direct description to introduce the occupants of the submersibles and the environment they are in. He describes the look of the characters, where they are sitting in and even their habits:

#### INSIDE THE SUBMERSIBLE

It is a cramped seven-foot sphere, crammed with equipment. ANATOLY MIKAILAVICH, the sub's pilot, sits hunched over his controls... singing softly in Russian. Next to him on one side is BROCK LOVETT. He's in his late forties, deeply tanned, and likes to wear his Nomex suit unzipped to show the gold? from famous shipwrecks covering his gray chest hair.

(See Appendix 2 , p. 135

### 3.3.3 Through Dialogue

As it is in the case of novel and play, dialogue in screenplay has the potential to build characters because it can hold and reveal information about the characters. It can say how

their emotions are, how their thoughts are, their feelings, their intentions, their hopes, their dreams, etc. Among the six functions of dialogue in screenplay as Syd Field recalls them (we will examine them in chapter five), one is “revealing character.” He says it is either through the dialogues of the character himself or through the dialogues of the others that he or she gets revealed. Field mentions Henry James’s theory of illumination in this regard in which the main character occupies the center of a circle, surrounded by other characters. He says each time a character interacts with the main character he or she illuminates aspects of the main character, like turning on a lamp in a dark room (Ibid, p. 71).

Francis Ford Coppola employs dialogues, dossier, and other-reflector characterization to build the characters of his screenplay *Apocalypse Now*. In scene 36 of the screenplay, he introduces Colonel William Kilgore through dialogue (See Appendix 3, p. 138).

In scene 20 (*Apocalypse Now*) Captain B-L. Willard receives an order to go deep into the jungles of Vietnam and kill Colonel Kurtz. The scene introduces Colonel Kurtz through “dossier.”

SCENE 20, INT.

They are looking up. Willard sits down, unconcerned. He takes out the dossier given him by ComSec. He flips through the letters and other documents.

WILLARD (V.O.): The dossier on A detachment had letters from Kurtz' wife and the wives and families of his men. All asking where to send future mail, understanding the necessary silence due to the nature of their work. None of the men had written home in half a year. Occasionally, in the background, we FEEL the terrifying buffeting of the distant B-52 BOMBING. (See Appendix 4, p. 138)

In scene 225 of the same screenplay (*Apocalypse Now*) Coppola develops further more the personality of Colonel Kurtz through “other-reflector characterization.”

SCENE 225, EXT.

WILLARD: Where's Kurtz? I want to talk to him.





MOONBY: Oh, you don't talk to Colonel Kurtz. (he puffs, then smiles) You listen to him. God, these are good. I kept these people off you, you know. It wasn't easy.

WILLARD: Why did they attack us?

MOONBY: Simple. They don't want him (Colonel Kurtz) to go. (See Appendix 5, p.140)

### 3.3.4 Through Action

To build character, description and dialogue are two effective tools, but what makes an “effective” character is “action.” “Action is character. What a person does is what he is, not what he says” (Ibid, p.79). “Without action” Field says, “the characters look dull and flat.” And what creates action is of course conflict; “without conflict there is no action, without action no character, without character no story” (Ibid, p. 31).

William Packard supports Field’s statements about action and like him believes action is not an “external thing.” It “happens inside.” Field says, action happens when a character wants something. It is in fact what he has to have, his dramatic need, the goal he sets to achieve. And if this dramatic need is worthy, something that the character “cares” about, he will turn out to be strong character. Because the more a character cares about his or her action, the more a reader will care about the character (Packard, 1987, p. 57, 60).

Linda Seger has similar view about “action” and character’s “dramatic need.” She divides action into two parts: the decision to act and the act itself. She argues that in a drama we usually see only the action, but it’s the decision to act that helps us understand how the character’s mind works. She says the moment of decision is a strong moment of character revelation, whether at that moment the character pulls the trigger, or says “yes” to an assignment or to commit to a relationship (Seger, 1994, p. 182).

The “moment of decision” is the beginning of a journey in which the character gradually develops and shows who he or she is. This journey of course should not be easy and the goal set by the character should not be achieved effortlessly. Because an easy goal do not

let the character gets developed. An obstacle on the way of the character will help her or him to come to life.

A good example for building character through action is the introducing of Colonel Kilgore in the screenplay *Apocalypse Now*. In scene 22 Colonel Kilgore walks through the dead bodies of Vietnamese soldiers and heartlessly drops playing cards on them.

SCENE 36, EXT

He (Colonel Kilgore) cracks the plastic wrapping sharply -- takes out the deck of new cards and fans them. The Colonel strides right past Willard with no further acknowledgement. The others follow, The Colonel walks through the shell-pocked field of devastation. Soldiers gather around smiling; as Kilgore comes to each V.C. corpse he drops a playing card on it --carefully picking out which card he uses.

KILGORE (to himself): Six a spades -- eight a hearts -- Isn't one worth a Jack in this whole place.

The Colonel goes on about this business. He is moving through the corpses, dropping the cards.

(See Appendix 3, p.136 )

### 3.3.5 Types of Characters in Screenplay

Linda Seger recognizes five types of characters in screenplay: “main characters”, “supporting characters”, “characters who add dimension”, “thematic characters”, and “mass-and-weight characters.” She makes her category based on the role and the “function” of characters in plot. Seger argues every character in screenplay should have an essential role to play and a dramatic function with a specific purpose. For example, she says, the function of a character who plays the role of an assistant or bodyguard for a main character is to add stature to him.

“Main character” is the protagonist of the story. He is the person who provides the main conflict and is sufficiently interesting to keep the audience intrigued for two or three hours. Protagonist is almost always a positive figure. Occasionally there are types of negative characters too. To provide dramatic conflict, protagonists need to be opposed by

someone, a person who stands against them. This figure is the antagonist. In terminology of cinema, protagonists and antagonists are known as good guys and bad guys.

“Supporting characters” are the ones who help and support main characters in accomplishing their goals. They either stand with the main characters or stand against them. They are people who give information, listen, advise, push or pull them, force them to make decisions, confront them, invigorate them and so on.

A story in which the protagonist achieves his goal with a little help from a catalyst, would lose the interest of the readers. There should be always characters who provide dimensionality for the story and for the main characters. These characters are not necessarily dimensional themselves, but their presence in the story makes the story dimensional. Seger calls these types of characters “characters who add dimensions.”

“Thematic characters” are characters who serve to convey and express the theme of a story. In many thematically complex stories, Seger says, one character is the balance character who makes sure that the theme is not misrepresented or misinterpreted.

The bodyguards, secretaries, assistants, and right-hand men are the type of characters who provide “mass and weight” to demonstrate the prestige, power, or stature of the protagonist or antagonist. Villains for example surround themselves with these type of character and this is how the readers learn they are important (Seger, 1994, p. 200).

Seger’s types of characters in screenplay resembles Harvey’s category of characters in novel. Protagonists, background characters, “mass and weight” characters, etc. Scriptwriters employ “absence” and “minor” (animals) characters as well. Abbas Kiarostami uses both types of characters in his screenplay *Life and Nothing else*. The story of the screenplay is about a director who is looking for one of his actors in an area (where the actor lives) hit by an earthquake. Although the character (missing actor) has a dominating presence in the screenplay we never directly see him.

At the beginning of the journey (looking for the missing actor) director’s little boy who is traveling with his father catches a grasshopper (minor character) and begins to play with it for a while. An act that sets up a long conversation between father and son.

### 3.3.6 Character's names and numbers

Name of the character can play an important role in building his identity, because, name can suggest many things about character. It can convey, for example, if he is a calm person or the opposite. Epstein has some suggestions about the names of the characters in screenplay. He says, first of all, the name should be real enough to be believable. Then, it should tell the readers something about the personality of the character. Third, it should be appropriate to the age, position, and gender of the character. And fourth, it shouldn't be hard to pronounce. As a "handy rule" he also says, depend on different circumstances it is better to use either the first or the last name of the character. Among the friends, the first name is better and among the officials the last name. And there is no need to give all characters names: "It can be useful to leave secondary characters with a descriptive monicker rather than a name: Loner" (Epstein, 2002, p. 93). Epstein cautions the scriptwriters not to use number or pronoun names to identify secondary characters. Epstein says, never name characters VERMIN #1, VERMIN #2, or THIEF. The last point he makes is about faked names. He says, be careful about making up foreign names. If you are not linguistics and are not familiar with the culture that you want to make names for, it is better you avoid it. And if you make up science-fiction names, they shouldn't sound fake.

Since the length of screenplay is confined to certain number of pages, the number of characters that it can support is limited. Script instructors discuss this aspect of character as well. Linda Seger says that too many characters overwhelm the readers and make them wonder which track to follow, "like watching a three-ring circus" (Seger, 1994, p. 199). She says, the readers can absorb at most six to seven characters in a screenplay of two to three hours film, and that might include the protagonist, the love interest, and perhaps one or two supporting characters. In most cases, she argues, scriptwriters develop three to five characters in their screenplays.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Fewer characters in screenplay do not mean fewer action and interaction in the story. On the contrary due to the nature of screenplay which has the capacity to hold as much as time and space variation it needs for its story, the characters of screenplay can participate in variety of actions. If we consider Syd Field's approach towards building plot of screenplay, in which every ten minutes something has to happen, then we will find the characters of screenplay very active. They run towards actions and interactions more frequently than the characters of a novel or play. It takes a while before the readers of a novel know the characters good enough to develop feelings for them. But in a screenplay all the main characters should be introduced to the readers in the first ten to fifteen pages. This trait can be considered in fact as a part of the screenplay's language; less characters, to compare with novel, and more action. In this regard screenplay is different from play too. Even though the two disciplines have similarities in terms of the number of characters, they are not alike in terms of "actions," play is bounded to a restricted time and space, screenplay is not.

## Chapter 4

(Thought)

### 4. “Thought” in *The Poetics*

After constructing plot and building characters to make a story a question arises: why do we do that? What is the purpose of making and telling a story? Aristotle says that the purpose of creating an artwork in general is in the enjoyment that man receives from three things: imitation, melody and harmony. The art of storytelling deals with all three concepts so the initial purpose of making story is enjoyment. Throughout the process of development of arts, however, artists learned to create other kind of enjoyment that would work at the level of intellect. Aristotle calls this creation “thought”; the intellectual drive force behind the outlook of the artworks. A factor that would engage contemplation through touching a human need. If we take Aristotle’s conceptual definition of “poetry” which “deals with general truth” as an ultimate goal for any artwork, “thought” is the power that pushes the artwork towards that “truth” (Aristotle, 1961, p.18). Considering this fact, one can conclude that any craft which lacks “thought” is not art.

Aristotle does not discuss “thought” as extensive as he does the other elements of writing tragedy; plot, character and diction. In his few mentioning of “thought,” he defines and describe it briefly. The first time he refers to “thought” is when he introduces the six elements of tragedy. Following a brief description of plot and character, he says, “thought is present in all they (the characters) say to prove a point or to express an opinion” (*Ibid*,

p. 13). There, he doesn't explain any further. Later in the book he describes "thought" two more times, each time again brief and quick. Once in chapter VI:

Thought is the third element in tragedy. It is the capacity to express what is involved in, or suitable to, a situation. In prose this is the function of statesmanship and rhetoric. Earlier writers made their characters speak like statement; our contemporaries make them speak like rhetoricians. A person's character makes clear what course of action he will choose or reject where this is not clear. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this choice clear, or in which the speaker does not choose or reject any course of action at all, do not express character. Thought comes in where something is proved or disapproved, or where some general opinion is expressed. (*Ibid*, p. 15)

The passage gives two different pictures of "thought." The first one relates "thought" to the intentions of the individuals, to the "person's character," to the things he thinks of. The other version links thought to the "general opinion" that is expressed in the play. In the first view, "thought," shows the "course of action" that character chooses or rejects. And it should be expressed through the dialogues of the character and also being "suitable" to the "situation." In this view "thought" stands in fact for the characters' opinions at any given time and at any circumstances and over any subject that he is involved in. If the subject that is discussed in the play is about "duel", for example, the character's opinion about "duel" should be projected clearly through words. Because, the choices he makes at any situation will eventually affect the course of the action in the story. The description of "thought" based on this approach resembles Aristotle's brief description of plot when he says it is "the arrangement of incidents." In the case of "thought," it is the arrangement of opinions; a logical pattern of discussions that directs the story towards a specific direction. It is in this regard that Aristotle criticizes the writers who make the characters "speak like rhetoricians." He says since lecturing does not show the character's choice in the course of action, it does not help the plot to get developed. Therefore it is not "suitable" to the dramatic "situations" happening in the story. In brief "thought" according to this view is the intention and determination behind the course of the events; the goals that the characters head for; something that they have to have. Novelists call this version of thought "stake."



Based on the second description and definition, "thought" is not a logical mechanism patterning the arguments in the plot. It is the "thought" of the story; the moral idea that the story tends to express. Aristotle's third and last attempt to describe "thought," draws a better picture of this version. In chapter XIX, he relates "thought" to the emotions that tragedy aims to provoke:

The expression of thought includes all the effects to be contrived by speech, and under this head come proof, refutation, the rousing of such emotions as pity, fear, anger, and the like, making things appear important or trifling (Ibid, p. 40).

According to this passage, "thought" is the emotional tone of the play which is set through "proof," "refutation," and "reasoning." Regarding the fact that the aim of the arts in general is to "reveal the truth" and tragedy tends to do that through stirring up emotions such as fear and pity, the definition of "thought" stands for the "moral idea" that the play expresses. In this context, "thought" is not the opinion of the individuals, but the "thought" of the play. A notion that is more or less equal to "theme."

#### **4.1 Thought and Stake in Novel**

There is no difference between play, novel, screenplay or any other narrative art when it comes to the necessity for a driving force behind the story. There should be always something that intrigues the characters to move forward and encourages the audience to follow their moves or in fact to follow the story. "Every novel is a quest novel. The characters will be seeking freedom or truth, revenge or exoneration, peace or sanity" (Stern, 1991, p. 176). Novelists call the dramatic need that Jerome Stern describes "stake." Bill Johnson, a teacher and story instructor, advises the writers to have something "at stake in their stories," something that is in need of resolution. He says, without "stake" the readers have no motivation to continue reading the story because there is no dramatic reward for them (Johnson, 2000, p. 103). Character's attempt to get something can be either internal (driven by an internal will) or external (a reaction to an external cause, a reaction to an obstacle on the way).

“Thought” as a desire to find the truth or explore a particular idea is an inseparable part of any artwork including novel. Although novelists refer to it as “theme” not “thought.” Jerome Stern says, when literary critics use “theme,” they generally mean the idea or point of a work, and “every work raises questions, examines possibilities, and imagine the consequences of actions.” Therefore having theme is inevitable in any novel (p. 240, making). Bill Johnson argues that the whole purpose of constructing plot is to heighten the tension over an issue of human need (theme). He says, plot of a story is not what the story is about, but the theme (Ibid, p. 45). Ronald B. Tobias says even science fiction and fantasy stories deal with a human problem and a human solution. Tobias states, fiction, whether it happens in Middle Earth or in a galaxy far, reveals truth that reality obscures (Tobias, 1993, p. 146).

Jerome Stern discusses the role that theme plays in advancing the plot. He says themes, like characters, can contribute to tension, be attacked, and suffer ironic fates. As an example he mentions John Barth who made his themes the central characters in *End of the Road* and *Giles Goat-Boy* (Stern, 1991, p. 241).

There is no need to search into hundreds of books written about novel to find out that while writing a story “theme is inevitable.” “What are you trying to say”, and “what is your story thematically”, are the questions that novelists have to answer by the end of their stories. Even Mark Twain who wrote the following lines in his notice preceding *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*, was pursuing “thought,” “person attempting to find a motive [and moral] in this narrative will be prosecuted.”

## 4.2 Thought and Stake in Screenplay

What drives a “screened text” is the idea or theme or whatever term that stands for “thought”:

The driving force behind making the film is not so much fascination with the story or characters, but fascination with an idea. It might be about the nature of love and friendship in *Tootsie*, about mediocrity and genius in

Amadeus, or about the world of the South that is Gone With Wind. But the theme is the impetus for the story (Seger, 1994, p.205).

The film stories or script stories are made and being made to embody thought or theme. A screenplay without theme is a "simple narration." Ronald B. Tobias quotes an example from novelist E. M. Forster who has tried to explain the difference between story and plot in his book *Aspects of the Novel*. Forster says the phrase "The king died and the queen died" is a simple narration reporting two simple events. This we can call a story. But if we connect the first event, the death of the king, with the second event, the death of the queen, and make one action the result of the other, we would have a plot. "The king died then the queen died of grief" (Tobias, 1993, p. 12).

Forester's example and explanation reveals the dramatic mechanism that transforms some simple events into a plot. It shows how a "thought" which in this case is "human grief," connects one situation to the other and forms plot. Plot in this transformation gets its validation in fact from thought not the physical connection of two or more events through a logical chain of cause and effect. This means that a simple description of a chain of physical movement, social or natural, beginning somewhere and ending somewhere else does not necessarily make a plot unless it reflects a "human need." The "driving force" or "idea" that Seger talks about in the above passage is the same dramatic energy that Aristotle calls "thought." As it is in the case of novel and play the engine of narration in screenplay does not work without this energy.

"Idea", "Theme", "Moral", "Message", "Subtext", are different words that script experts use for the same concept: "thought." Syd Field uses the term subtext. He says, "subtext is what happens below the surface of the scene; thought, feelings, judgments-what is unsaid rather than said" (Field, 1984, p. 86). Epstein uses "theme", "moral" and "idea" for "thought." He believes "theme" and "story" have an organic relationship. In this regard he advises the scriptwriters to choose a story that makes their point "just by being the story it is" (Epstein, 2002, p. 55) As an example he says, if you want to say greed is bad, tell a story in which greed destroys people's lives. He also suggests that the scriptwriter let the story take care of the "theme," not the characters. He argues that by making

characters talk about “what you want to say,” you cannot develop the theme because theme is the “thought” of the story not the “thought” of character.

Epstein identifies the theme of a number of screenplays in his book *Crafty Screenwriting*. Below we quote some of them. First comes the name of the screenplay, then the theme or message it carries:

*Jaws*: Nature is still bigger than you.

*The sixth Sense*: Guilt versus redemption.

*Chinatown*: Decency is not enough to defeat corruption.

*Braveheart*: Freedom is worth dying for.

*Modern Times*: Progress can destroy people’s lives.

*Traffic*: Drug laws are more evil than drugs.

*Star Wars*: Faith can defeat empires.

*Memento*: Memory versus reality.

*A Clockwork Orange*: Free will versus sin.

*Rashomon*: Truth is relative.

*Almost Famous*: Fame is addictive.

(*Ibid*, p. 54)

Andrei Tarkovsky often expresses the “thought” or “theme” or “message” of his screenplay both through characters and through the story. In the excerpt taken from the screenplay *Nostalgia* one of the main characters of the story decides to burn himself to death. In this way, he believes he will save humanity which is lost in the chaos of modern life. Before setting fire on his body, he stands next to a statue in one of Rome’s squares and makes a statement which is in fact the statement of the screenplay.

## NOSTALGIA

What ancestors speak in me? I can't leave simultaneously in my head and body. That's why I can't be just one person. I can't feel myself countless things at once. There are no great masters left. That's the real evil of our time.

(See Appendix 6, p. 143)

### 4.2.1 Stake

Scriptwriters vastly use “stake” or the intentions of the characters to fulfill a task. Linda Seger who is “A Guide for Writing and Rewriting by Hollywood Script Consultant” says, producers or executives more often ask a writer “what is at stake?” She says, stake gives the audience a reason to care about character. Without stake the readers cannot associate with the story because they cannot see any connections between their experience and the experience of the character. She names seven “psychological stakes” that scriptwriters use, all related to the human needs: Survival, Safety and Security, Love and Belonging, Esteem and Self-Respect, The Need to Know and Understand, The Aesthetic, and Self-Actualization (Seger, 1994, p. 125, 126).

Like Seger, William Packard believes tension is always the result of “how much is at stake for each of the characters.” He says, action begins when character wants something and “whatever it is that the character wants, that will be his action, his objective, the one thing that he has to have” (Packard, 1987, p. 59). The most frequent stakes that are used in most drama”, according to him, are discovery, seduction, revenge, and escape (Ibid, p. 59, 60).

“Drama begins when somebody wants something” Alex Epstein says. Epstein recognizes two kinds of stakes, internal and external. In internal stake the audience might care about what happens because they care about the main character. For example, they may get concern to know if a kid who is lost in a story finally will get home or not. In external stake, the audience intrinsically cares about something. “Will Austin Powers stop Dr.

Evil from blowing up the world?” Epstein believes the best stakes are both external and internal.

He also believes “the goal has to be something that we care about.” In this regard he says, a story can fail if the audience does not care about the stakes. For example, who cares if the main character wants to make a million dollar (Epstein, 2002, p. 44).

A good example for “stake” in screenplay is the goal set at the beginning of the screenplay *Apocalypse Now*. Three high rank military officers inform Captain B.L. Willard about his mission: going deep into the jungles of Vietnam to kill Major Kurtz.

CIVILIAN: Exactly -- you'll go up the Nung River in a Navy P.B.R. -- appear at Nu Mung Ba as if by accident, re-establish your acquaintance with Colonel Kurtz, find out what's happened ú and why. Then terminate his command.

WILLARD: Terminate ?

CIVILIAN: Terminate with extreme prejudice.

(See Appendix 7, p. 146)

#### 4. 3 Conclusion

There is no disagreement among different disciplines of art when it comes to “thought.” The words that present “thought” may change from time to time and from place to place, the types of “thoughts” or “themes” that receive attention in different periods of time, places, and circumstances, may also change. But the concept of thought in regard to art is always the same. Thought is an inseparable part of any disciplines of art including screenplay.

## Chapter 5

(Diction)

### 5. Description, Dialogues

In chapter XVII of *The Poetics*, Aristotle teaches the “dramatists” how to begin writing their stories and how to develop it. After making two suggestions, telling them to visualize the things they want to put “into words” and also to use natural emotion to write emotional scenes, he recommends the dramatists to lay out the outline of their story first and then “fill it out with incidents.” He then gives an example, drawing the outline of the story of *Iphigenia*:

A girl who had been offered in sacrifice mysteriously disappeared; she was established as priestess in another country where the law required her to sacrifice strangers to the goddess; some time afterwards her brother arrived. . . on his arrival he is captured and is about to be sacrificed when he makes himself known... (Aristotle, 1961, p.35)

Aristotle’s outline or synopsis of *Iphigenia* has three of the four required elements of a complete story; it has plot, it has character and it has thought. The only element it misses is diction. Diction is the mean with which the “poets” form their “poetries.” Without diction there would be no play in fact, no novel, and obviously no screenplay. It is through the factor of diction that not only a synopsis is turned into a dramatic writing, but also different types of narrative writings get identified (the proportional use of dialogue

and description in screenplay, novel and play distinguish them from one and other). Aristotle defines Diction as follow:

Diction is the fourth of the elements we mentioned. By diction I mean, as I said before, the use of words to express one's meaning. Its function is the same in verse and prose (*Ibid*, p. 15).

The definition of diction in the above passage resembles that of the term "composition" in contemporary literature. At the beginning of chapter VI, where we took the passage from, Aristotle uses in fact the word "composition" to describe diction, although there he is more specific about one type of writing which is verse. He says, "by diction I mean the actual composition of the verse" (*Ibid*, p.12). In the above quote, however, Aristotle makes three points. One, he recognizes the "words" as means of diction; the "means of words" or the "means of language" is the tool that the poets employ to create their works. The second point is about the purpose of using the "means of language." He states that poets compose their works to "express meaning." In the third point, he identifies the types of texts that can use "diction" or the function of diction in different forms of literature; he says diction functions the same in verse and prose.

From what Aristotle describes as the characteristics of diction, one can conclude that it stands for both the dialogues of the play and also its descriptive part. There are some references in *The Poetics* that support this assumption. In chapter XV when Aristotle discusses the four aims of characterization, he says, "words and action express character." We know by "words" he means dialogue. And to record "action" on the paper, the "poet" has no choice but to describe it. There is a statement in Chapter XVII that clearly stands for the term description. As he discusses the role that personal emotions can play in writing emotional dialogues, he says, "the poet should also, as far as possible, work out the positions and attitudes of the actors in the play." How can a poet "work out the positions and the attitudes of the actors" without using the mean of description. So, the term diction in *The Poetics* stands for both dialogue and description..



### 5.1 Characteristics of “Good Diction”

A “good diction” should achieve some qualities, Aristotle says. First of all, it should be “clear” without being “common.” Aristotle believes poets should use the language that consists of current words, because it brings clarity to the language of the play. At the same time poets shouldn’t overuse the current words. Because it may take away the dramatic strength of the writing. He also encourages dramatists to use “unusual words” because it gives dignity to the writings and also prevents it from becoming “commonness” and “colloquialism.” By “unusual words” he means, strange words, metaphors, “lengthened forms” and anything contrary to current words. He however recommends the poets not to fill their writings with unusual words either, because it will weaken the ability of the writing to communicate with the addressees. He says, writers are better to be moderate in using both current and unusual words: “what we need is a mixed diction” (*Ibid*, p.47).

Aristotle prohibits the overuse of “over-brilliant language” as well. He says over-brilliant language “obscures both character and thought” (*Ibid*, p.54). In this regard he suggests the writers to keep “elaborate diction” for the parts that have little action and little presentation of character. He criticizes the writers who have attained mastery in diction before they know how to construct a plot. He argues that a series of well written speeches, expressing character, would not fulfill the essential function of a story (*Ibid*, p.14).

Aristotle also believes that a writer should avoid speaking or writing in his own person (first person). He says since the essence of poetry is imitation and since a person cannot get himself engaged in the process of imitation, it is better he stays away from it. But, if he has no choice but to say something about himself, it should be very little. In this regard, he admires Homer who “realizes when he should write in his own person” (*Ibid*, p. 52, 53).

### 5.1.1 Five Common Errors

While examining the problems raised by critics about some poetries, Aristotle calls five common errors that “dramatists” commit. They are as follow: “impossible”, “inexplicable”, “harmful”, “contradictory” and “artistically wrong.” Some of these errors, according to him, are permissible some are not. Contradiction (the poet who contradicts what he has said in his own person) (*Ibid*, p. 60), is the kind of error that is not permitted, as well as “harmful” (The representation of evil) (*Ibid*, p. 56). “Artistically wrong” is also wrong because “it is a lesser fault not to know that a hind has no horns than to make a bad picture of it” (*Ibid*, p.56).

Aristotle justifies two errors of “impossible” and “inexplicable. He bases his justification of the two writing situation on this premise that “If the poet represents something impossible, it is an error, but he is right if the poetry achieves its own purpose” (*Ibid*, p.55). As an example for “impossible”, he mentions a painter, Zeuxis, who paints “men better than life.” He says, it is true that there are no such men that he paints. But since the ideal model for artists should be better than actual reality, his “impossible” painting is acceptable (*Ibid*, p.60). In other words, exaggeration in art is permissible as long as it helps to convey something worthy.

Aristotle deals with “inexplicable” almost the same way that he does with “impossible.” First he makes a reference to an example of what is inexplicable; “something that man says exist, but it is not.” He then says if we rightly interpret what we claim to exist, even though if it does not, then it wouldn’t be “inexplicable” anymore. Because, “it is also likely that unlikely things should happen” (*Ibid*, p. 60). In other words dramatists are free to write about anything they feel to write (the things that exist and the things that do not exist), as long as they can rationalize it.

## 5.2 Diction in Novel

The definition of term diction hasn’t changed since the time of Aristotle. Contemporary

novelist and story instructor, Jerome Stern repeats what Aristotle says in defining diction: "Diction means word choice." The stand of diction in novel terminology, however, is changed; diction stands more or less for the style of writing, as opposed to one of the four elements of constructing story, as Aristotle would see it. "Dialogue" and "description" are the two terms that represent Aristotle's diction in contemporary literature. And since they have equally important role in constructing novel, novelists and novel instructors deal with both tools in more detail.

### 5.2.1 Description

Jerome Stern believes the role of description in novel is as important as those of action and dialogue. He says description can move the story forward just as dialogue and action do. It is through description that the readers become present in the story; "if your readers can be made to see the glove without fingers or the crumpled yellow tissue, the scene becomes vivid" (Stern, 1991, p.111). He says without provocative settings (description of sets), characters seem to have their conversations in vacuums.

Stern also believes "evocative description" can help building character. He says, writers sometimes forget to describe their characters. They let them only to talk and to think. Meanwhile, they should continually make readers aware that their characters are warm-blooded creatures. Stern, however, warns the writers who "love description too much," not to paint pictures, but "paint action." He says, detailed scenery and long descriptions do not generate momentum. On the contrary they can dissipate tension. According to Stern "good description" follows natural physical movements, "the single sweep of the eye from head to foot, from basement to roof, from left to right." He says without a "good description" the readers become confused.

Hank Searls agrees with Stern on the effective role of description in story. He says, any time the writer can substitute a short narrative summary for a long passage of "expository dialogue" he or she is better off. Long passages of lifeless dialogues are even more boring than long passages of exposition (McCutcheon, 1996, p. 29).

Description can be made either directly or indirectly (through the eyes of the characters). Most descriptions are made directly, but there are storytellers who like indirect description. Sue Harrison is one of them. She says she likes to allow most of her description to be seen through a character's eyes. In that way, she says, description doesn't become boring and readers learn something about the character as well (*Ibid*, p. 19).

### **5.2.2 Narrator, Point of view, Tense**

"Narrator", "point of view" and "tense" are three important elements of description. Without any of these elements, in fact, description is impossible. Jerome Stern extensively examines all three elements. About narrator, the teller of the story, Stern says, narrator is like characters; writers invent narrator just as they invent characters. Narrator can be anyone, "an Italian grandmother, an Israeli taxi driver, or an autistic child." Stern says writer needs to make decision about the "voice style" (how much narrator will know about each character, and how insightful he or she will be). In this regard, he distinguishes seven types of "voice style": Omniscient narrators, limited omniscience narrators, objective narrators, foregrounded narrators, effective narrators, naïve narrators, and unreliable characters.

"Omniscient narrators" are those who are "free to tell whatever they want about the characters and the events, even things that may not have happened yet." Stern argues that some times it is more convincing if the narrator does not know the whole story. He calls these types of narrators "limited omniscience narrators."

"Objective narrators" are those who describe what is externally observable. Narrators who draw attention to themselves by their prose style, commentary, and observation so that readers are always aware of their presence, the presence of the teller of the story, are called "foregrounded narrators."

Narrators who make the narration as invisible as possible so that the story seems to be simply telling itself, are “effected narrators.” “Naïve narrators” are those who generate satire, irony, or humor. And finally, narrators who try to bend the story for their own reasons are “unreliable narrators.”

To narrate a story a narrator should choose a “point of view.” “[Point of view] refers to the central consciousness that narrates the tale. The usual classification is pronominal-point of view is first, second, or third person” (Stern, 1991, p.178). A novel can be narrated either by first person, second person, or third person.

First person narration gives a sense of engagement to the story. It is storytelling through a distinctive voice, a character, a personality, with the first words of the story. Second person narration is striking and powerful. Through addressing the readers (second person), a writer can make them part of his or her story. The use of third person storytelling goes back to centuries ago. Almost all the ancient tales are made based on this strategy; it is always easier to tell story about someone else’s adventure.

To describe something (person or object) a narrator needs to employ tense as well; present tense, past tense or even future tense. The use of future tense to narrate story is very uncommon. Writers usually use future tense to forecast or to describe the imaginary events. On the contrary, past tense is the most used tense in telling stories particularly when it comes to longer narration like novel. It is believed that past tense can convey more in-depth feeling in longer narration. Many writers also use present tense. Present tense is said to create a very rushed feeling and it is good in short stories.

### **5.2.3 Dialogue**

Bill Johnson makes several suggestions to the beginning writers for “writing dramatic dialogue” (Johnson, 2000, p. 69). First, he says, dialogues should be short and focused like the way people talk. Second, avoid packed dialogue. Packed dialogue is the dialogue that seems to ask for a response. Third, have characters say only what need to be said.

Forth, don't have characters address each other by name more than once unless you have a reason. Fifth, don't speak very correct and formal. Sixth, don't load up a character's dialogue with mannerism as a way to suggest individuality. Seventh, avoid having characters be too elusive in their speech. Eighth, do not load your story with unnecessary dialogue to convey information. Ninth, don't automatically start a scene with characters making introductions. Tenth, individual characters should have different tones of voice during the events of a story. Finally, "dialogue should advance the story. That means if you have witty, forceful dialogue that doesn't serve some purpose in your story, you're in trouble" (Ibid, p. 70).

Jerome Stern discusses different types of dialogues in novel. According to him, there are four types of dialogues: summary dialogue, indirect dialogue, direct dialogue, and intermixed dialogue. Summary dialogue, he says, is a brief report and it is highly efficient. It takes up a little space, but it speaks a lot. Summery dialogue, however, doesn't give much sense of the texture of the conversation.

Indirect dialogue, Stern says, is a more detailed way of reporting dialogue and it renders the feeling of what was said without directly quoting it. It is both efficient and rich in texture.

Direct dialogue is the most dramatic form. It expresses exactly what is on the character's mind with no attempt to hide anything. It makes the reader feel he or she is in the room with the characters and overhears their conversation in real time, as it happens.

Intermixed dialogue can be a combination of all the three abovementioned types. It can be intermingled within a single scene or even a single speech. Intermixed dialogue makes the feeling of a fairly long conversation within a few lines.

Marc McCutcheon and six contemporary novelists, Sue Harrison, Christina Skye, Johnny Quarles, Hank Searls, O'Neil DeNoux, and John Ames discuss some other aspects of dialogue in novel. For the last views on this subject, we return to their round table. McCutcheon asks: What makes dialogue sound forced or phony? Hank Searls responds, "Butler-maid dialogue is the worst," the dialogues that go nowhere. For example, Searls

says, when two characters mention the things that both of them knew already. Ames believes, dialogues that “read” rather than speak often sounds forced, as do most political or sentimental comments. DeNoux says direct address can be ridiculous: “Oh, Ted, I want you.” “Oh, Alice, yes.”

Marc McCutcheon other question is: “What makes dialogue sound flat or just plain boring?”

Hank Searls says, long passages of expository dialogue in which a character gives the readers background information. Quarles says, “when a character has no distinguishing traits of his own, then he has no personality, and his dialogue is most likely going to lack magnetism.” DeNoux says, too much exposition and plot explanation makes the dialogue flat and boring; dialogues that tells you everything. Ames believes, giving speeches, and dialogue that hasn’t got any point are flat and boring.

Marc McCutcheon’s next question is about speaking styles: “Do you contrast speaking styles between two or more characters?”

Quarles believes using different speaking styles creates tension, conflict, romance, attraction of opposites, humor and any emotion that the writer wants to render. Ames says, speaking styles will automatically contrast if the writer takes care to differentiate each main character.

Marc McCutcheon’s last question in regard to dialogue is about the use of “descriptive verbs.” He asks if the writers like to follow a passage of dialogue with “he said/ she said” or they prefer descriptive speeches tags like, muttered, exclaimed, moaned, barked, roared, hissed, purred, etc...?

Searls says he uses “said.” He says “nothing is simpler or more professional.” Quarles says he usually uses “said”, but sometimes he might use “shouted” or ‘muttered.” Ames says he is happy with simple “she said, he said.” He says, “If everyone has been gasping and moaning and barking and roaring for fifty pages, it hardly matters if the hero

suddenly “shouts” something at the end of the scene. This might become more significant, however if a simple “said” had set the tone first” (McCutcheon, 1996. p. 27).

### 5.3 Diction in Screenplay

Syd Field believes that “screenplay is a reading experience before it becomes a visual experience”(Field, 1984, p.197). He says, “A good screenplay works from page one, paragraph one, word one,” that is why the scriptwriter has “to keep the reader turning pages” (Ibid, p. 199). Field encourages the beginning writers to consider this fact and take the style of their writings more seriously because “the first thing a reader notices [in a screenplay] is the way the writer puts words down on the page-the style of the writing” (Ibid, p. 102).

The descriptions should be “short” and “to the point” though (Ibid, p. 199). No playing with words, no trying to be literary, simple and condensed. In his other remarks about description Field says it should be “general” not “specific.” “To describe your character” for example, he says, “you don’t need more than four sentences.” Field gives some samples for describing different subjects. For character his sample is “heavy set, chain-smoker, in his early 40’s”, for house “large and ornate” for car; “fancy, late model” and for dress,” elegant” (Ibid, p. 81).

Paul Argentini, has similar view about description in screenplay. He says description “should not be overblown, poetic, or even merely adequate.” It should be brief and simple (Argentini, 1998A, P. 60). Somewhere else in his book he says, “Want to write the world’s longest sentences? Do it in a novel, not here. Use quick-talk. Short sentences. One-word slug lines. Grab the reader by the nose, and pull him along with you” (Ibid, p. 60).

Alex Epstein advises the “beginning scriptwriters” to write “exactly” what they want the readers to “see” and to “hear.” And *only* what they can see and hear. He says, describing a scene without showing it visually is not what a scriptwriter should do; “show, don’t



tell” (Epstein, 2002, p.101). He also asks scriptwriters to avoid “adjectives, adverbs, and subordinate clause” when they want to describe an action (*Ibid*, p. 129).

Audio description (description of songs and music) follows the same laws of visual description in screenplay; you don’t need to be specific, be general. Instead of mentioning the name of a specific song as a part of the ambiance of a scene, Alex Epstein says, it is better the scriptwriter suggests a certain style of music. For example he says, the screenwriter can write, “Somewhere a tiny radio plays surf music.” Or “The cradle is empty except for the bright yellow tape recorder, still eerily playing the Barney song” (*Ibid*, p. 114).

Descriptions in screenplays are not always “brief”, “general”, and “non poetic.” Some scriptwriters particularly Europeans prefer to detail their scenes. In *Oedipus Rex*, Pier Paolo Pasolini even details the type of the afternoon that he has in mind for the scene.

Scene 1. A street in Sacile. Exterior. Day

A street, a house, and the late afternoon sun. Those long afternoons deep in the provinces. Only the silence, the emptiness - and the flies -of that time of day.

The countryside is just beyond the houses. Humble dwellings, for the lower middle classes.

(See Appendix 8, p. 151)

### **5.3.1 Point of view, Tense, Narrator**

The use of “tense” and “point of view” (grammatical person) in screenplay are restricted to one permanent tense and one permanent person. Scriptwriters always have to narrate their stories from the point of view of the third person (he, she, it and they) and in present tense. The reason behind this according to Syd Field is that script has to describe what the character sees or in fact what the camera sees- the events that are happening at the present time and from the view of the third person. Even if the events of the story have happened

in the past or will happen in the future, they should be described in present time and from the view of the third person not in the “happened” or “will happen” form and from the view of “I” or “you” (Field, 1986, p.23).

The grammatical restriction of screenplay gravely affects its style of writing and turns it into a distinguish trait. While novelists freely choose different tenses and points of view for their stories which ultimately results to variation, scriptwriters have to confine their sense of variation within a designated tense and person and create diversity within limitation.

On the contrary to “tense” and “point of view,” the use of “narrator” is optional in screenplay as it is in novel. The narrator of story in screenplay can be any one; he or she can be one of the characters of the story or, as it is in the case of most screenplays a neutral person, an undetectable narrator. The nature of information that the narrator provides is also optional. He or she might be “highly subjective, telling us details of his or her inner life, or might be objective, confining his or her recounting strictly to external” (Bordwell, 1990, p. 68).

### 5.3.2 Dialogue

Epstein sees equal strength in “dialogue” and “action” for moving the story of screenplay forward. In this regard, he believes the difference between action and dialogue is the way they function: “action shows what people do. Dialogue tells us what people think.” Therefore, “action mostly shows you what happens while, by and large, only words can tell you why things happen or what it means that they happened” (Epstein, 2002, p. 131).

Epstein explains that depends on the circumstances what tool to choose, dialogue or action. “Some times a single visual movement can show more than pages of dialogue”, he says, and some times it works better in your script if you replace “a scene of pure action” with dialogue (*Ibid*, p. 162). Epstein believes that “telling a story through spoken words is not, per se, inferior to telling it through images” (*Ibid*, p. 161).

Linda Seger has more or less similar view about the role of dialogue in screenplay. She believes what pushes the story of a screenplay forward is motivation and motivation can be “physical, expressed through dialogue, or situational” (Seger, 1994,p.150). She, however, believes, relying too much on “explaining motivation” rather than “showing motivation” in screenplay is “rarely effective”, although “it may work in novel” (*Ibid*, p. 153).

William Packard has different view about dialogue in screenplay. He believes “dialogue doesn’t matter that much.” What matter in screenplay, according to him, is “structure.” He says, “certainly dialogue is helpful, certainly literate dialogue is pleasant, certainly funny dialogue is fun”, but “screenplays are structure” (Packard, 1987, p. 63).

Aside from “moving the story forward,” Syd Field recognizes other functions for dialogue in screenplay. He says, dialogue “communicates facts and information to the reader.” It also “reveals character.” It is through dialogue that we learn who the characters are. Next, he says, “dialogue establishes relationship between characters.” It also connects scenes. To explain this function of dialogue he says, “you can end a scene with a character saying something, then cut to a new scene with another character continuing the dialogue.” And finally, “dialogue ties your script together and makes a very effective cinematic tool” (Field, 1984, p. 72).

Field makes two suggestions for writing “effective dialogue.” First, he says, let the characters speak for themselves and second, avoid writing in “beautiful prose or iambic pentameter.” He says, people don’t talk in clear and elegant prose. They talk in “fragments, run-on sentences, incomplete thoughts.” They also keep changing mood and subjects.

A good example for “dialogue” in screenplay is the conversation between Bowman (an astronaut) and Hal (the central computer system of the spaceship which is gone stray and disobeys the orders), in screenplay *Odysey 2001*. In the pervious scenes Hal has locked out two astronauts and has caused the death of one, now the second astronaut (Bowman) is trying to reach the computer and dismantle it.

HAL: Too bad about Frank, isn't it?

BOWMAN: Yes, it is.

HAL: I suppose you're pretty broken up about it?

PAUSE

BOWMAN: Yes. I am.

HAL: He was an excellent crew member.

(See Appendix 9, p. 153)

### 5.3.3 Voice-over

Voice-over is one of the most effective dramatic devices in cinema. Filmmakers use voice-over for variety of purposes. They use it to fill in gaps that are difficult to express dramatically. They use it to glue different times, spaces and subjects. They use it to expose something about character. Voice-over can be used to create inner conflict. It can be used to evoke emotion and so on. The function of voice-over on screen is similar to those of music and song, just instead of a track of song or music accompanying a picture, a narrator or character speaks on the sound track behind an image.

The reflection of voice-over on screenplay however takes place naturally in accordance with the abilities and limitations of writing. This means that the dramatic effect that the contrast between picture and “off screen” voice creates on screen cannot be reconstructed on screenplay due to linear nature of writing. But screenplay still benefits from the potential literary components of voice-over and the textual contrast that it may create. Because voice-over is the only part of screenplay that is not restricted to a specific style of writing (simple and brief), a specific tense (present tense) and a specific point of view (third person); it is open to any person, any tense, and any style of writing. And that of

course can produce a literary effect which is exclusive to screenplay because screenplay is the only narrative text that uses “voice-over.”

The screenplay *Apocalypse Now* begins with a “voice-over.” Sergeant B.L. Willard expresses his feeling about Vietnam:

*Apocalypse Now*, scene 1

Willard (Voice Over): in Saigon, searching for a mission. When I was on R&R back home I wanted to be back in Saigon. When I'm in Saigon, I want to be back home on R&R.”

Plot in screenplay *Hiroshima Mon Amour* written by Marguerite Duras for Alain Resnais is entirely constructed based on voice-over.

*Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Part I

She: Four times at the museum in Hiroshima. I saw the people walking around. The people walk around, lost in thought, among the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, among the photographs, the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, the explanations, for want of something else.

Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.

(See Appendix 10, p. 155)

## 5.4 Conclusion

It seems the most differences that exist between screenplay and novel are initiated from their different approaches towards “diction.” The first noticeable difference between the two comes from their relationship with description and dialogue. While novel relays upon both description and dialogue almost equally, in screenplay, dialogue has much more weight than description. Both mediums use “narrator,” “point of view” and “tense,” but

while novel can employ all tenses and three types of points of view (first person, second person and third person), screenplay is restricted to one tense (present tense) and one point of view (third person). And finally, screenplay uses “voice-over” which is unknown to novel.

## **Chapter 6**

*(Between Borders)*

### **6. A screenplay-novel**

Before beginning the final discussion on the artistic language of screenplay in the next chapter (conclusion), we intend to review quickly the similarities and differences that are found so far in our research between novel and screenplay. The reason for this is to figure out if we can spot a base between the two disciplines in order to construct an interdisciplinary artwork upon. Similar characteristics between the two disciplines can provide a collective frame for a new work, and the differences between the two can create the needed contrast and the driving energy for it. The diameters of this spot therefore have to have the capacity to harmonize the rhythms of both similar and different elements. In other words the rhythms of the two types of elements should be transferable into the format of this cross line point. Otherwise the act of “crossing boundaries” would be only a physical gathering of the two disciplines with their independent rhythms.

Robert LePage, the well-known Canadian play director uses the performing nature of two disciplines (cinema and play) to create the collective frame of his works (theater-cinema). He also forms the driving force of his works through the different nature of cinema and play: the contrast between “live” and “indirect.” Le Page of course, harmonizes the rhythms of all the related elements within his interdisciplinary experiments. Installation artists take similar process to create their works. They also extract the energy of both

types of elements from two or three disciplines and harmonize their rhythms within the entity of a new work.

Based on the facts that our research has provided so far, there are enough similar elements between screenplay and novel to be used in the format frame of a new work standing between the two; both use plot, character, dialogue, description and thought. The differences between the two disciplines are also substantial enough to be employed for creating contrast. One discipline describes the world through words, the other also uses words but from a visual and audio point of view. These two types of elements (similar and different), of course play different rhythms within their own disciplines. In screenplay for example, plot is restricted to a certain length, while the plot of novel knows no limitation in this regard. These rhythms however are transferable; it is possible, for example, to employ the length of screenplay for writing a novel. We can do the same with the world view of the two disciplines. With some adjustments in the style of writing we can insert the visual and audio effects employed by screenplay in the text of the new work. During the process of adjustment, inevitably, both types of elements lose some of their original strength. But this is how they can create a new type of energy within the body of the new work. Again, in Robert LePage works, neither the play part of his work nor the film part can independently function the way they would within their own discipline. And this is comprehensible because neither the play part is a real "play" nor the cinema part is a real "cinema." They both are parts of a new work called "play-cinema."

Considering all these, in an attempt to near the distance between the languages of screenplay and novel in order to create a new artwork with a new dramatic strength, we have employed some of the traits of novel's language in the structure of a screenplay. The outcome is a body of writing with a hybrid nature, what we call screenplay-novel. Below we will describe the traits of the work in five areas of plot, character, thought, diction (description and dialogue), and format. The title of the screenplay-novel is *Between Borders*.



## 6.1 Plot

*Between Borders* portrays the story of two men trapped in a neutral zone between the two countries of Turkey and Bulgaria. They have just left Turkey with their counterfeit passports. Now they are trying to get into Bulgaria to go to Italy. The plot of the story is structured based on the outlines of the formal screenplay-it is an action plot-it has three acts (two plot points), recognition and reversal (element of surprise), suspense. Its length is ninety three pages in screenplay-novel format which would make around 120 pages in screenplay format. *Between Borders*, however, does not always respect the conventions of formal screenplay; it enters into the territory of novel from time to time. In regard to the plot, for example, it depicts the events that are not directly related to the story line. This practice begins right from the beginning of the narration. In the first exchange of dialogues between two supporting characters (bus driver and a boy), we learn that there is a fire in the area; an event that at first seems to be related to the plot or to a subplot, but by the end it turns to be only a literary backdrop that continues throughout the story.

The screenplay-novel contains other events that have no direct relationship with the plot. In scene 2, as the two main characters of the story (Wartan and Daryush) are anxiously sitting in the bus practicing their lines to perform in the Turkish Costumes, the bus stops in front of a police road blockage and a police officer gets on board. He curiously surveys the passengers and asks the driver to drive into a gravel road. The short event has no role in the plot, but it serves a purpose: deepen the ambiance of fear and anxiety.

In scene 11 after being refused entry into Bulgaria by the Bulgarian Customs, Daryush returns to the neutral zone, confused and worried. There he sees a woman walking in and out of smoke looking for her ducks. In the distance, as the smoke thins out two ducks appear and then disappear again. The woman keeps searching and calling. Like the event of the police officer getting on board of the bus, this event has a literary function, creating a distressed mood in the mind of the reader.

*Between Borders* depicts also events that are only informative with no direct connection to the plot. In scene 25, as Wartan and Daryush are standing by the barbed-wire fences thinking about a way to get out of the zone, a girl appears on the other side of the fences.

Wartan calls her and asks her a few questions about the area. The girl politely responds. The presence of the girl in the scene, aside from inspiring the two characters (Wartan and Daryush) to refresh their memories about love, is informative. When the girl leaves the scene, the readers learn more about the location of the zone and its distance from Greece.

The screenplay-novel employs suffering mood at two levels of social and individual. The two little boys appearing at the beginning of the story, the boy who washes the windshield of the bus and the peddler, represent suffering at social level (poverty). The suffering of the villagers being hit by a devastating fire, the suffering of the two main characters being trapped in the zone, the suffering of Turkish man not being able to take his stuff into Bulgaria, and also the suffering of Daryush's mother when he is in hiding are all happening at the individual level. The sufferers of *Between Borders*, however, do not passively accept their situation. They struggle and fight. Some succeed to end their suffering, like the two main characters of the story; some continue to carry it along, like the two little boys.

*Between Borders* follows the convention of three acts. Two plot points divide the story into three parts. The first part begins from the beginning of the story to the point that the main characters confront an obstacle. In this part, we learn about the characters' background, their relationship, and the reason they travel. The second part portrays the challenges of the characters to overcome the obstacle. And the third part brings upon the resolution which is the change of the characters. The noticeable thing about the plot points is that they both are the same obstacle. In fact, the characters cannot over pass it, they just change their direction to avoid it.

## 6.2 Character

*Between Borders* employs more than "six to seven" main and supporting characters. Aside from Wartan and Daryush who are the two main characters, there are fifteen other distinguish supporting characters in the story. Some of them like Second Officer deliver only a few line, some like Turkish man speak quite a lot. These characters are as follow:

three Bus Drivers, Peddler, Truck Driver, First Turkish Officers, Second Turkish Officer, First Clerk, Second Clerk, Yugoslavian man, Nervous Man, First Girl, Second Girl, Capitan Vincent and Bulgarian Girl. There are also mass-and-weight characters and characters who add dimension to the story. Some of them even deliver lines. The guys who are denied entry to Bulgaria for example:

Wartan is talking with two guys in the nearby hallway.

Wartan: What do the Turks want now?

First guy: They want to know why Bulgarians rejected us.

Characters of screenplay-novel are mainly built through dialogue and action. Description does not play a very active role in this regard. Most descriptions are brief and limited to a reference to the age of the character: “a little boy” for example or “a man in his mid twenties”:

Two male passengers, one in his late thirties, the other in his late twenties are sitting in the back row of the bus talking. The older man (Wartan) is holding a bottle of beer. The younger man (Daryush) looks nervous.

Screenplay-novel uses “other-reflector characterization” to build the identity of the characters as well. In scene 3, First Officer informs us that Wartan is a heavy drinker.

FIRST OFFICER: You smell like a brewery.

WARTAN: Yes, I had a few beers on the way.

FIRST OFFICER: Good. Good. You have started your day very well.

In scene 19, Wartan himself reveals some information about the two girls he is talking to. He says they are Iranians and they have been living in Istanbul for a while. In scene 16, he does the same with another passenger (Capitan Vincent).

WARTAN (to Daryush): This gentleman is Captain Vincent He's a magician. (to Capitan) This is my friend Daryush.

Captain shyly looks at DARYUSH and smiles.

WARTAN: Captain Vincent is a sailor. He's been on the water for thirty years. He's been everywhere.

In the following example the acts of the two characters reflect their priorities who in their own way reveal their personalities While young Daryush frantically searches around for some glue, experienced Wartan finds a place in a shade to drink his beer:

WARTAN: There are many others. We'll find someone. Let me get a drink.

WARTAN heads for the shop.

DARYUSH: You wanna stay here?

WARTAN: Don't you want to take a break?

DARYUSH: We haven't started yet.

WARTAN: We'll get it soon. Let's take a break.

DARYUSH: I don't need a break.

DARYUSH leaves. WARTAN takes out his cigarettes as he enters the shop.

In the following example, the Turkish man's dialogues reveal a great deal about his identity, the purpose of his travel and the reason he is in the zone:

TURKISH MAN: God damn Bulgarians. They are giving me a hard time.

DARYUSH: Yeah!

TURKISH MAN: They don't let me take my stuff across.

He turns back and points at the boxes in the back seat.

TURKISH MAN: These are some gifts for my daughter. She is getting married in Germany. The Bulgarians want to document them in my passport.

### 6.3 Thought and Stake

Freedom is the theme of *Between Borders*. Two men struggle to find their freedom through crossing the borders. At first, they seem to be doing well, but as the battle continues they realize that this is not an easy task. By the end of the story, one of the men (Wartan) reaches to this conclusion that freedom is where there is “no competition, no war, no identity.” That is why he thinks the zone (between the two borders) is the most beautiful piece of land on the face of earth:

WARTAN: It is easy if you try it. Life is simple and beautiful.

DARYUSH drinks some more.

WARTAN: If it was up to me, I'd stay here forever. What is behind those barbed wirefences? Anything good?

DARYUSH does not respond. WARTAN also becomes quiet for a while.

WARTAN: The magician said this was one of the most beautiful places he's ever seen. He's right. This place is beautiful. There is no war here, no competition, no identity.

The struggle for freedom forms the “stake” of the story as well. The constant challenge to cross the borders along with the danger of being caught by the border guards moves the story forward. After each attempt and its aftermath, which is usually a defeat, a question rises; what is next. This question drives the story forward and motivates the readers to continue.

### 6.4 Diction (Description)

Descriptions in screenplay-novel carry most of the traits of description in screenplay; they are short, not poetic, written in present tense and from the point of view of the third parson. And although they do not provide a detailed picture of the sceneries they are descriptive enough to intrigue the readers' imagination:

There is a thick curtain of smoke in the air. Wartan comes out of the smoke and approaches Daryush who is shaving his beard using the mirror of a car.

Screenplay-novel sometimes ignores the principles of description in screenplay and leans towards those of novel. According to the grammar of screenplay, any time there is a new “location” or a new “time” in the course of an action, there is a scene and it should be identified and treated separately. Screenplay-novel ignores this instruction and uses some literary techniques like conjugations and prepositions to connect many of the separated locations and times. In the following example, the three phrases “Daryush approaches the other window” and “a few seconds later” and “he then goes to the corner of the corridor” connect four separate scenes. The outcome is a longer piece of description which presumably has more dramatic affect:

A military jeep enters the customs yard and stops near the entrance of the building. A soldier gets out of the jeep and talks to someone in a window. He then gets back into the jeep and drives to the left side of the building. Daryush approaches the other window. A group of passengers are gathered around a radio. It seems they are listening to an important news. A few seconds later the jeep appears again, this time carrying a tanker of water behind it. It passes the group of passengers and drives away. Daryush turns back and begins to pace in the hallway for a while. He then goes to the corner of the corridor. Wartan is talking with two guys in the near hallway.

### 6.5 Diction (Dialogue)

Majority of dialogues in screenplay-novel aim to advance the plot of the story and help building the characters, very much like those of screenplay. In fact, their absence in the text would affect the building of both. The following dialogues taken from scene 4, for example, inform us that Daryush, one of the main characters of the story, is a Turk from Turkey. This means he is fleeing his own country. Revealing this fact right when the characters are in the customs area suddenly increases the dynamic of the plot and adds to the characters’ dimensions.

PEDDLER leaves. WARTAN opens the pack of cigarettes and takes one out.

DARYUSH: I shouldn’t speak Turkish.

WARTAN: No, you shouldn't. You see as soon as you opened your mouth he realized that you were Turk. That's why I keep asking you not to speak Turkish. It's all right for me if I use a few Turkish words. But not for you. I am a foreigner here, you are not. Anybody will recognize your accent quickly. Be careful man.

There are also dialogues in screenplay-novel that have nothing to do with plot or characters; they are rather normal chats. Their role in the story is to create ambiance. This means their absence would hurt plot or characters, but it would affect the harmony of the text in general. The conversation between Wartan and Yugoslavian man is a good example of this type of dialogues:

Yugoslavian man: This weather can easily kill people.

Wartan: It is hell.

Yugoslavian man: If the smoke wouldn't block the sun it would become even hotter.

Wartan: Sure it would.

Yugoslavian man: Have you been to Yugoslavia before?

Wartan: Several times. I like Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavian man: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey. They're all burning.

Wartan: It's not good.

Yugoslavian: No, it's not.

## 6.6 Elements of Style

The style of format of the screenplay-novel resembles that of the screenplay with some adjustments made to fit the nature of the text. The scenes of screenplay begin with a "scene heading" or "slug line," indicating the time (day or night), the location (in the bus, in the zone, etc), and the light source of the scene (exterior or interior), all typed in capital letters. The scenes of screenplay-novel also begin with a scene heading, but it does not refer to the light source of the scenes and it is not typed in capital letters

Dialogues in screenplay are placed in the center column below the name of the characters which is typed again in capital letters. Dialogues of screenplay-novel are placed in the left hand side column following the name of the characters which is typed in upper and lower case.

The scenes of screenplay follow each other from a close distance on the pages. In other words, there is not that much space between the two scenes. The scenes of screenplay-novel keep their distance from each other; when a scene ends the new scene always begins from the top of a new page, like the beginning of a new chapter in novel. The following example demonstrates scene heading and the style of formatting dialogues and descriptions in screenplay-novel:

First clerk is cleaning the shelves. There is another clerk in the store (Second clerk), working behind the cash register.

Second clerk: Is he really a filmmaker?

First clerk: I don't know. He says so.

Second clerk: What kind of a filmmaker that has no money!

First clerk: This is what I am thinking too. He sounds important though.

Second clerk: I think he's bluffing.

First clerk: Maybe. We'll see.

First clerk approaches the window and looks outside.

*Between Borders* reflects the characteristics of both screenplay and novel. It stands between the borders of the two disciplines; a narrative writing with a hybrid nature. This identity remains unchanged as long as the screenplay-novel is on the paper bonded within the diameters of "writing." But how it would work on the "screen" is not clear.

The "screen" version of *Between Borders* would be a film with some particularities of its own. First of all, it would have a pace that would be different from that of the "formal"



cinema. This pace would evidently affect the length of the film and accordingly its plot. A full translation of scene 2, for example, in which the bus leaves the gas station, the two main characters introduce themselves to the readers and the police officer gets on board, would occupy a big chunk of the screening time and naturally create a slow pace.

The pace and the length of the film obviously would affect the plotting and the pattern of characterization and also other techniques of narration. In brief the “film” version of *Between Borders* would have an identity of its own as its “writing” version does.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of *The Poetics*, as it was mentioned earlier, Aristotle discusses the characteristics of different kinds of arts. He states that the arts differ in three ways; either they imitate different things or imitate by different means, or imitate in a different manner. As an example for the first situation Aristotle mentions the two types of men that comedy and tragedy “imitate”; comedy imitates “worst” men, tragedy imitates “serious” men. For the imitation by “different means” he refers to music, painting and writing which each uses different tools to imitate. For the third situation (manner) he says:

The third difference lies in the manner in which each of these things is imitated. One may imitate the same model by the same means, but do it in the manner of the narrator either in his own person throughout or by assuming other personalities as Homer does, or one may present the personages one is imitating as actually performing actions before the audience. (Aristotle, 1961, p.6)

What differentiates tragedy from epic according to this passage is the way they narrate their stories; tragedy uses dialogue, epic uses narrator; different approaches towards diction in fact. This is one of the differences between the two mediums. Aristotle mentions other differences as well. Aside from “thought” that all genres of play perceive it alike, different ways of building character and plot affect the “manner of imitation.” Plot in tragedy, for example is the “imitation” of one action; in epic it is the imitation of several actions. Tragedy presents its character directly through “acting” epic does it through description and impersonation. There are still other factors such as time, location and theme that shape the manner of imitation. The story time of tragedy according to Aristotle should evolve around “one revolution of sun”, while the story time in epic has no limitation; it can continue even throughout centuries. Although Aristotle is not specific about the “unity of space” in tragedy, it is not hard to conclude that the

parameters of space in epic are much wider than those of tragedy. In regard to theme, epic explores both funny and serious topics, while tragedy deals only with serious subjects.

These differences, however, are not stylistics or the results of different abilities to create artwork; tragedy is not different from epic because it portrays man "the way he is" while epic portrays man "better than life." They are rooted in the stands of the two genres towards the language of "play" the factor that shapes the four types of tragedy and epic (simple plot, complex plot, characterization and suffering) as well. It is true that both genres use the same language but their approaches towards the same language are different. And that makes them distinguished genres.

Having this in perspective, the differences between the two mediums of screenplay and play are bigger because they distinctively use different languages. Again, they both use the "means of words" but since the "arrangement" of these words occurs within the forms of two different disciplines, the languages they produce or communicate with become different. In other words, in order to read a play script, we have to know the language of play script not the language of novel. This is the spot that most of the problems of reading screenplay are initiated from. We tend to read a screenplay as we read a novel. That is why it becomes "impossible" to read, as David Cronenberg puts it in words (Cronenberg, 2001, p.1).

Aristotle was aware of the fact that different genres of poetry create different languages through the same "means of word." That is why he warns the writers who want to translate a story into a play not to forget the capacity of the language of the two mediums. In chapter XVIII, he criticizes those who ignore this fact:

It is necessary to remember what has already often been mentioned, and not to compose a tragedy with an epic plot structure, by which I mean a plot with many stories, as would be the case if someone were to make the whole story of the *Iliad* into a tragedy. In the *Iliad*, because of its magnitude, the different parts adopt a length appropriate to each, but in tragedies such length is contrary to the concept of the drama. One may prove this by referring to those who have made the whole story of the fall of Troy into a tragedy, and not, like Euripides, parts of that story only, or

to those who wrote a tragedy on Niobe, but not in the way Aeschylus did. These writers have been hissed off the stage or at least been unsuccessful, for even Agathon was hissed off the stage for this reason alone. (Aristotle, 1961, p.38)

Should a writer fail to realize the deference between the language of “play” and “story” while turning a “story” into a play, his work will “hiss of the stage.” Agathon, according to Aristotle is a good example of this kind of failure. What has Agathon missed in his practice that caused him an artistic defeat? Playwright and play instructor, Michel Wright says, not “thinking theatrically.” Based on years of experience, teaching his students how to write play, he argues that without thinking theatrically, one cannot write a good play. In this content he says the biggest challenge that he always confront with in his classes is the fact that most of the students tend to think in terms of film or print fiction writing, while writing a play. He makes an example of a student who writes a one-act play with twenty different locations and a cast of a hundred. He says when he sees this kind of approaches towards writing a play he knows that the student “understands neither the realities nor the potential of the stage” (*Ibid*, p.1).

According to Wright, the language of play has a direct relation with the understanding of the realities and potential of the stage. He says, “the playwright needs to start by considering the components of the theatrical and end by trying to access and utilize these components in their writing” (*Ibid*, p.2). It is in this regard that he asks his students to participate in all kinds of theatrical activities including acting, set dressing, directing, lighting, and so on, before writing a play. He says it is through learning the “theatrical components” that we can write in its language.

What Wright calls “components” is in fact the abilities and the limitations of play to explore and express; the dramatic extension that it can maneuver within while addressing the audiences or the readers. These are the primary factors in forming the language of any artwork. Aristotle uses the term “nature” for abilities and limitations. In chapter IV of *The Poetics*, as he discuss the process of development of tragedy he mentions variety of changes that were introduced into tragedy “until it found its true nature.” Throughout the course of this development he says, Aeschylus introduces a second actor, Sophocles adds

both a third actor and painted scenery, and “when spoken parts came in, nature herself found the appropriate meter”(Ibid, p.16). Aristotle uses the term “nature” a few times in *The Poetics* with the same concept.

The language of any artwork then gets established on the bases of its abilities and its limitations. The language of a black and white painting, we can presume is formed differently from the language of a “color” painting due to its components. If a painter of black and white genre changes the component of his work, adding one more color to it for example, that would affect the language of the work. Let’s take the invention of sound in cinema as a concrete example. The language of narrative films made before the invention of sound is fundamentally different from that of the sound era. The structure of plot in two eras are different, the characters are presented differently, no mention about the-dialogue. By the coming of color and the other filmic techniques the process of language transformation continued. Very much like that of the play; many changes were introduced into cinema until it found its current language. Different genres and different kinds of films were developed in the same manner. So, adding only one element to the list of the film ingredient can change the whole structure of film. Considering this fact now, let’s see what the components of screenplay are.

The research into the structure of the three major mediums of narrative writings (play, novel and screenplay) proved that they all employ Aristotle’s four elements of story structure (plot, character, thought and diction), although each differently. Screenplay in this regard showed some distinguish attitudes.

One of the characteristic of screenplay is its length which is the reflection of the length of the formal film. What Aristotle says about the natural process that eventually set the length of the play in the classic era, is true about the length of the film in modern time. Following years of practice and experience, cinema gradually found its convenient length which is a span of almost two hours time. This length proved to be appropriate for the filmmakers to express their stories and messages. The audiences also seem to be comfortable with this length. Evidently screenplay picked up the two hours period as well, although involuntary, and transformed it into its own measurements; one hundred

and twenty pages of description and dialogues, almost one page for a minute of the screening time. This length became standard in the terrain of scriptwriting. So “standard” that some of the screenplay instructors like Syd Field, set the details of the plot structure in their teachings based on the page numbers. The “first plot point,” for example, he says, should occur around page 30, the mid point around page 60 and the second plot point around page 90:

Act I, the beginning is a unit, or block, of dramatic (or comedic) action, that is 30 pages long. It begins on page one and continues on to the plot point at the end of Act I. ...Act II is a unit, or block, of dramatic (or comedic) action, that goes from page 30 to page 90, from the plot point at the end of Act I to the plot point at the end of Act II. ...Act III is also a unit of dramatic or comedic action; it goes from page 90 to page 120, or from the plot point at the end of Act II to the end of your script. (p. 28) ...Once you establish the midpoint, Act II becomes a 60-page unit that is broken down into two basic units of dramatic action that are each 30 pages long. (Field, 1984, p. 128)

Right or wrong, this is what the motion picture establishment expects from the scriptwriters. They want them to fit their stories into 120 pages and break them down into sections with almost equal length. Undoubtedly this restriction demands lots of compromises from the scriptwriter, but this is how the language of formal screenplay is regulated. This restriction and its reflection on the other elements of storytelling in screenplay, however, is the most distinctive trait in the structure of plot in screenplay.

In regard to character, screenplay shows also some distinctiveness. The number of main characters in screenplay is limited to a few. Linda Seger believes six to seven, not more. And due to the condensed plot of screenplay, its characters run through “actions” more frequently. On his way home, James Bond, “jumps his car off a rickety bridge” kills two of his enemies and crosses the ocean with a small boat.

Most of the screenplay’s particularities come from its relationship with diction (description and dialogue). As a written text screenplay is a medium of description and indirect demonstration. It presents its contents through symbolic references, more precisely through words; if it is cold or warm, if the birds are singing or the dogs are

barking it is through the words that we get to know them. In this regard, screenplay functions like novel; it arranges its symbolic codes to intrigue the readers' imaginations. There is a big difference between the two mediums though. While novel is a story told in "words" screenplay is "a story told in pictures" (Syd, 78). And that has caused screenplay to develop its own way of talking and describing. Dialogue in screenplay is "short and focused." It is "quick-talk" and to the point. Description is also brief and pinpointing. To refer to the time of an event, for example, scriptwriters use only one word: "Day" or "Afternoon." And to picture the location of the event they provide a short description like "on a crowded beach." Imagining the mood of the afternoon and visualizing the crowded beach in detail is the job of the readers. This characteristic of screenplay obviously demands a high volume of imagination. But it also gives an abstract tone to its texture. The following excerpt, taken from the screenplay *Easy Rider*, written by Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, and Terry Southern, reflects this fact. Both descriptions and dialogues are short yet inspiring. It is the first scene of the story:

Scene 1, La Contenta bar. Day

WYATT and BILLY enter on motorcycles. They travel to front of cantina and stop at door. Several Mexican men enter through door.

WYATT: Buenas dias. (Good morning)

MEN: Bueno Amigos. Han denito a visitar? (All right, friends. You come here to visit?)

MAN: Vamos amigos. (Come on, friends.)

Mexican leaning on crate looking off.

MAN: Vamos a mirar. (Let's go and look.)

Looking over pile of junk to three Mexican looking.

MAN: Jesus, mira a nuestros amigos. Jesus, look at our friends.)

BILLY and WYATT standing at rear of cantina with Mexican and little girl-JESUS and another Mexican move out from rear door to greet them.



(Fonda, 1969, P. 41)

Descriptions and dialogues are brief but clear and indicative. They reveal enough information about time, location and the characters of the event. From the early exchange of words between the two motorcyclists and the Mexicans we learn that they know each other and their relationship is friendly. We also learn that Wyatt and Billy are not there to drink or eat something; they are there to “look” at something. The dialogues indicate the time of the event as well; it is morning.

The descriptions are as informative as dialogues. They picture several movements, the arrival of Wyatt and Billy on motorcycle, the entering of Mexican men through the door of cantina, and the body movement of the other Mexicans who are leaning on crate. The descriptions also show the location of the scene. It is in front and in the rear of a roadside café somewhere in Mexico. From the reference to the pile of junk in the rear of cantina we can visualize the surroundings as well. The descriptions do not refer to the weather, which means it is a normal day, a warm and sunny Mexican type day. The names of the motorcyclists indicate that they are American. They also speak Mexican which means they have been enough in Mexico to learn the language.

The piece holds enough dramatic information to narrate a story in a literary manner. It depicts the characters, the location and the time of the story. It also sets a sense of suspense to intrigue the readers’ curiosity: two Americans go to the backyard of a Mexican cantina to “look” at something. As we turn the pages we learn more about that “something” and get more involved with the story that surrounding it. By the end when we put the screenplay aside, there is still something going on in our memory and in our feelings, the presence of a new thing that didn’t exist before, the presence of a new world with its own exclusive “time.” What I call T5. This is the affect of a “dramatized” writing.

The language of the screenplay is simple yet complex and of course not subordinate to any other artistic language. Like other artists, the screenwriters have to restrict themselves within the regulations of their medium. And since the medium they practice in imposes



two types of restrictions on them (writing and film), the artistic language they compose produces some characteristics that are not known to the literary conventions. And that makes the reading of the screenplay both simple and challenging. As a matter of fact, while the reading of the screenplay at the “writing” level is simple, communicating with it at the artistic level is hard and requires a new way of reading which is different from that of the old conventions. However, if this new approach becomes popular, it will open the way to a huge collection of new dramatic writings that has been neglected for years. In conclusion, in our research about the language of screenplay, we quote the words of a sociologist who has practiced this approach.

In 1991, French public television held an amateur screenwriting contest in which Sabine Chalvon-Demersay, a French sociologist, examined the roughly 1,000 entries to the contest from her own point of view: sociology. The following passage, taken from her book *A Thousand Screenplays*, describes the difficulties she first had with the language of screenplay and the feeling that she gets after “understanding” it.

Before presenting an overview of the projects. I must say a few words about the form of the texts themselves. Reading a screenplay requires some experience. Such stories can be rather baffling for a reader who is used to finding a stylistic effect, a metaphor, an unusual turn of phrase, to making a lucky discovery in a work of literature. Authors of screenplays cannot indulge in these types of effects. This is, moreover, what makes their undertaking so difficult: they must be able to evoke emotions and create atmospheres without resorting to the first stage of a long process, the final product of which is not a novel, but a film. In fact, they deliver *written instructions* and conform more to the literary genre of owner’s manuals than to that of fictional tales: their aim is not to open their reader’s mind to the evocative realm of free associations; on the contrary, they attempt as best they can to harness that realm so as to limit the number of possible interpretations of their works. These authors therefore rely upon very simple and rather stereotypical figures, suggesting casting possibilities so that the reader will immediately associate known actors with the characters in the script. This form of writing has a great advantage over others when one attempts to penetrate the meaning of its content: indeed, writing conventions are not disguised as they are in a literary text, but are emphasized and therefore become more easily accessible to the reader. But the form is also a little surprising. Therefore one must keep the genre and its constraints in mind in reading these excerpts, and be prepared to give the words time to be filled with images.

As for myself, it was while I was living with the texts, reading them, that they began to come to life and were filled with living characters. And it was only then that I began to understand them (Chalvon-Demersay, 1999, p.7).

## APPENDIXES 1 - 11

### Appendix 1

#### The outline of plot in *Titanic*

##### 38 EXT. TERMINAL – TITANIC

Jack (LEONARDO DICAPRIO) and Fabrizio, both about 20, carrying everything they own in the world in the kit bags on their shoulders, sprint toward the pier. They tear through milling crowds next to the terminal. Shouts go up behind them as they jostle slow-moving gentlemen. They dodge piles of luggage, and weave through groups of people. They burst out onto the pier and Jack comes to a dead stop... staring at the cast wall of the ship's hull, towering seven stories above the wharf and over an eighth of a mile long. The Titanic Is monstrous.

Fabrizio runs back and grabs Jack, and they sprint toward the third class gangway aft, at E deck. They reach the bottom of the ramp just as SIXTH OFFICER MOODY detaches it at the top. It starts to swing down from the gangway doors. Jack and Fabrizio come aboard.

##### 40 EXT. TITANIC AND DOCK – DAY

The mooring lines, as big around as a man's arm, are dropped into the water. A cheer goes up on the pier as SEVEN TUGS pull the Titanic away from the quay.

##### 45 INT. THIRD CLASS BERTHING / G-DECK FORWARD – DAY

Jack and Fabrizio walk down a narrow corridor with doors lining both sides like a college dorm. Total confusion as people argue over luggage in several languages, or wander in confusion in the labyrinth. They pass emigrants studying the signs over the doors, and looking up the words in phrase books. They find their berth. It is a modest cubicle, painted enamel white, with four bunks. Exposed pipes overhead.

##### 46 INT. SUITE B-52-56 – DAY

By contrast, the so-called "Millionaire Suite" is in the Empire style, and comprises two bedrooms, a bath, WC, wardrobe room, and a large sitting room. In addition there is a private 50-foot promenade deck

outside. A room service waiter pours champagne into a tulip glass of orange juice and hands the Bucks Fizz to Rose (KATE WINSLET). She is looking through her new paintings. There is a Monet of water lilies, a Degas of dancers, and a few abstract works. They are all unknown paintings... lost works. Cal (Rose's fiancée) is out on the covered deck, which has potted trees and vines on trellises, talking through the doorway to Rose in the sitting room.

#### 60 EXT. POOP DECK / AFTER DECKS – DAY

Jack sits on a bench in the sun. Titanic's wake spreads out behind him to the horizon. He has his knees pulled up, supporting a leather bound sketching pad, his only valuable possession.

JACK glances across the deck. At the aft railing of B deck promenade stands ROSE, in a long yellow dress and white gloves... They are across from each other, about 60 feet apart, with the well deck like a valley between them. She on her promontory, he on his much lower one. She stares down at the water.

He watches her unpin her elaborate hat and take it off. She looks at the frilly absurd thing, then tosses it over the rail. It sails far down to the water and is carried away, astern. A spot of yellow in the vast ocean. He is riveted by her. She looks like a figure in a romantic novel, sad and isolated.

Jack is gazing at Rose. Rose turns suddenly and looks right at Jack. He is caught staring, but he doesn't look away. She does, but then looks back. Their eyes meet across the space of the well deck, across the gulf between worlds.

Jack sees a man (Cal) come up behind her and take her arm. She jerks her arm away. They argue in pantomime. She storms away, and he goes after her, disappearing along the A-deck promenade. Jack stares after her.

#### 62 INT. CORRIDOR / B DECK – NIGHT

Rose walks along the corridor. A steward coming the other way greets her, and she nods with a slight smile. She is perfectly composed.

#### 63 INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

She enters the room. Stands in the middle, staring at her reflection in the large vanity mirror. Just stands there, then— With a primal, anguished cry she claws at her throat, ripping off her pearl necklace, which explodes across the room. In a frenzy she tears at herself, her clothes, her hair... then attacks the room. She flings everything off the dresser and it flies clattering against the wall. She hurls a hand mirror against the vanity, cracking it.

## 64 EXT. A DECK PROMENADE, AFT – NIGHT

Rose runs along the B deck promenade. She is disheveled, her hair flying. She is crying, her cheeks streaked with tears. But also angry, furious! Shaking with emotions she doesn't understand... hatred, self-hatred, desperation. A strolling couple watch her pass. Shocked at the emotional display in public.

## 65 EXT. POOP DECK – NIGHT

Jack is kicked back on one of the benches gazing at the stars blazing gloriously overhead. Thinking artist thoughts and smoking a cigarette.

Hearing something, he turns as Rose runs up the stairs from the well deck. They are the only two on the stern deck, except for QUARTERMASTER ROWE, twenty feet above them on the docking bridge catwalk. She doesn't see Jack in the shadows, and runs right past him. Her breath hitches in an occasional sob, which she suppresses. Rose slams against the base of the stern flagpole and clings there, panting. She stares out at the black water.

Then starts to climb over the railing. She has to hitch her long dress way up, and climbing is clumsy. Moving methodically she turns her body and gets her heels on the white-painted gunwale, her back to the railing, facing out toward blackness. 60 feet below her, the massive propellers are churning the Atlantic into white foam, and a ghostly wake trails off toward the horizon.

She leans out, her arms straightening... looking down hypnotized, into the vortex below her. Her dress and hair are lifted by the wind of the ship's movement. The only sound, above the rush of water below, is the flutter and snap of the big Union Jack right above her.

JACK: Don't do it.

Rose starts to turn. She is overcome by vertigo as she shifts her footing, turning to face the ship. As she starts to climb, her dress gets in the way, and one foot slips off the edge of the deck.

She plunges, letting out a piercing SHRIEK. Jack, gripping her hand, is jerked toward the rail. Rose barely grabs a lower rail with her free hand.

QUARTERMASTER ROWE, up on the docking bridge hears the scream and heads for the ladder.

Jack holds her hand with all his strength, bracing himself on the railing with his other hand. Rose tries to get some kind of foothold on the smooth hull. Jack tries to lift her bodily over the railing. She can't get any footing in her dress and evening shoes, and she slips back. Rose SCREAMS again.

Jack, awkwardly clutching Rose by whatever he can get a grip on as she flails, gets her over the railing. They fall together onto the deck in a tangled heap, spinning in such a way that Jack winds up slightly on top of her.

Rowe slides down the ladder from the docking bridge like it's a fire drill and sprints across the fantail

66 EXT. POOP DECK – NIGHT

Jack is being detained by the burly MASTER AT ARMS, the closest thing to a cop on board. He is handcuffing Jack. Cal is right in front of Jack, and furious. He has obviously just rushed out here with Lovejoy and another man, and none of them have coats over their black tie evening dress. The other man is COLONEL ARCHIBALD GRACIE, a mustachioed blowhard who still has his brandy snifter. He offers it to Rose, who is hunched over crying on a bench nearby, but she waves it away. Cal is more concerned with Jack. He grabs him by the lapels.

CAL: What made you think you could put your hands on my fiancée?! Look at me, you filth! What did you think you were doing?!

ROSE: Cal, stop! It was an accident.

IT IS SATURDAY APRIL 13, 1912.

Rose unlatches the gate to go down into third class. The steerage men on the deck stop what they're doing and stare at her.

73 EXT. BOAT DECK – DAY

Jack and Rose walk side by side. They pass people reading and talking in steamer chairs, some of whom glance curiously at the mismatched couple. He feels out of place in his rough clothes. They are both awkward, for different reasons.

87 INT. THIRD CLASS GENERAL ROOM

The scene is rowdy and rollicking. A table gets knocked over as a drunk crashes into it. And in the middle of it... Rose dancing with Jack in her stocking feet. The steps are fast and she shines with sweat. A space opens around them, and people watch them, clapping as the band plays faster and faster.

## 88 EXT. BOAT DECK – NIGHT

The stars blaze overhead, so bright and clear you can see the Milky Way. Rose and Jack walk along the row of lifeboats. Still giddy from the party, they are singing a popular song "Come Josephine in My Flying Machine"

They fumble the words and break down laughing. They have reached the First Class Entrance, but don't go straight in, not wanting the evening to end. Through the doors the sound of the ship's orchestra wafts gently. Rose grabs a davit and leans back, staring at the cosmos.

## 109 EXT. ATLANTIC – NIGHT

TITANIC glides across an unnatural sea, black and calm as a pool of oil. The ship's lights are mirrored almost perfectly in the black water. The sky is brilliant with stars. A meteor traces a bright line across the heavens.

## 110 EXT. ON THE BRIDGE

Captain Smith peers out at the blackness ahead of the ship. QUARTERMASTER HITCHINS brings him a cup of hot tea with lemon. It steams in the bitter cold of the open bridge. Second Officer Lightoller is next to him, staring out at the sheet of black glass the Atlantic has become.

## 131 INT. / EXT. BRIDGE

Inside the enclosed wheelhouse, SIXTH OFFICER MOODY walks unhurriedly to the telephone, picking it up.

FLEET (V.O.): Is someone there?

MOODY: Yes. What do you see?

FLEET: Iceberg right ahead!

KRUUUNCH!! The ship hits the berg on its starboard bow.

137 EXT. The ice smashes in the steel hull plates. The iceberg bumps and scrapes along the side of the ship. Rivets pop as the steel plate of the hull flexes under the load.

## 153 INT. FIRST CLASS CORRIDOR / A-DECK

A couple of people have come out into the corridor in robes and slippers. A Steward hurries along, reassuring them.

## 158 INT. BOILER ROOM 6

Stokers and firemen are struggling to draw the fires. They are working in waist deep water churning around as it flows into the boiler room, ice cold and swirling with grease from the machinery. Chief Engineer Bell comes partway down the ladder and shouts.

## 174 EXT. STARBOARD SIDE

Boat 7 is less than half full, with 28 aboard a boat made for 65. The boat lurches as the falls start to pay out through the pulley blocks. The women gasp. The boat descends, swaying and jerking, toward the water 60 feet below. The passengers are terrified.

## 179 EXT. OCEAN / TITANIC / BOAT 6

The hull of Titanic looms over Boat 6 like a cliff. Its enormous mass is suddenly threatening to those in the tiny boat.

## 215 IN THE WATER BELOW

There is another panic. Boat 13, already in the water but still attached to its falls, is pushed aft by the discharge water being pumped out of the ship. It winds up directly under boat 15, which is coming down the right on top of it.

The passengers shout in panic to the crew above to stop lowering. They are ignored. Some men put their hands up, trying futilely to keep the 5 tons of boat 15 from crushing them.

Fifth Officer Lowe, in Boat 14 is firing his gun as a warning to a bunch of men threatening to jump into the boat as it passes the open promenade on A-Deck.

## ON THE PORT SIDE

Lightoller is getting people into Boat 2. He keeps his pistol in his hand at this point. Twenty feet below them the sea is pouring into the doors and windows of B deck staterooms. They can hear the roar of water cascading into the ship.



LIGHTOLLER: Women and children, please. Women and children only. Step back, sir.

222 ROSE'S PERCEPTION

The ropes going through the pulleys as the seamen start to lower. All sound going away... Lightoller giving orders, his lips moving... but Rose hears only the blood pounding in her ears... this cannot be happening... a rocket bursts above in slow-motion, outlining Jack in a halo of light... Rose's hair blowing in slow motion as she gazes up at him, descending away from him... she sees his hand trembling, the tears at the corners of his eyes, and cannot believe the unbearable pain she is feeling...

Rose is still staring up, tears pouring down her face.

Suddenly she is moving. She lunges across the women next to her. Reaches the gunwale, climbing it...

Hurls herself out of the boat to the rail of the A-Deck promenade, catching it, and scrambling over the rail. The Boat 2 continues down. But Rose is back on Titanic.

230 EXT. BOAT DECK, STARBOARD SIDE

Cal comes reeling out of the first class entrance, looking wild-eyed. He lurches down the deck toward the bridge. Waltz music wafts over the ship. Somewhere the band is still playing.

251 EXT. A-DECK / B-DECK / WELL DECK, AFT

Jack and Rose clamber over the A-Deck aft rail. Then, using all his strength, he lowers her toward the deck below, holding on with one hand. She dangles, then falls. Jack jumps down behind her. They join a crush of people literally clawing and scrambling over each other to get down the narrow stairs to the well deck... the only way out.

Seeing that the stairs are impossible, Jack climbs over the B-Deck railing and helps Rose over. He lowers her again, and she falls in a heap. Near them, at the rail, people are jumping into the water.

260 EXT. STERN, ON THE POOP DECK

Jack and Rose struggle aft as the angle increases. Hundreds of passengers, clinging to every fixed object on deck, huddle on their knees around FATHER BYLES, who has his voice raised in prayer. They are praying, sobbing, or just staring at nothing, their minds blank with dread.

262 EXT.

JACK and ROSE make it to the stern rail, right at the base of the flagpole. They grip the rail, jammed in between other people. It is the spot where Jack pulled her back onto the ship, just two nights... and a lifetime... ago.

Above the wailing and sobbing, Father Byles voice carries, cracking with emotion.

279 EXT. OCEAN / UNDERWATER AND SURFACE

Bodies are whirled and spun, some limp as dolls, others struggling spasmodically, as the vortex sucks them down and tumbles them.

281 AT THE SURFACE: a roiling chaos of screaming, thrashing people. Over a thousand people are now floating where the ship went down. Some are stunned, gasping for breath. Others are crying, praying, moaning, shouting... screaming. Jack and Rose surface among them. They barely have time to gasp for air before people are clawing at them. People driven insane by the water, 4 degrees below freezing, a cold so intense it is indistinguishable from death by fire.

JACK: Keep swimming. Keep moving. Come on, you can do it.

ROSE: What's that?

Jack sees what she is pointing to, and they make for it together. It is a piece of wooden debris, intricately carved. He pushes her up and she slithers onto it belly down.

But when Jack tries to get up onto the thing, it tilts and submerges, almost dumping Rose off. It is clearly only big enough to support her. He clings to it, close to her, keeping his upper body out of the water as best he can.

284 EXT. COLLAPSIBLE A / OCEAN

The boat is overloaded and half-flooded. Men cling to the sides in the water. Others, swimming, are drawn to it as their only hope. Cal, standing in the boat, slaps his oar in the water as a warning.

285 EXT. OCEAN

JACK and ROSE still float amid a chorus of the damned. Jack sees the ship's officer nearby, CHIEF OFFICER WILDE. He is blowing his whistle furiously, knowing the sound will carry over the water for miles.

## 288 EXT. OCEAN

Jack and Rose drift under the blazing stars. The water is glassy, with only the faintest undulating swell. Rose can actually see the stars reflecting on the black mirror of the sea.

Jack squeezes the water out of her long coat, tucking it in tightly around her legs. He rubs her arms. His face is chalk with in the darkness. A low MOANING in the darkness around them.

Rose is unmoving, just staring into space. She knows the truth. There won't be any boats. Behind Jack she sees that Officer Wilde has stopped moving. He is slumped in his lifejacket, looking almost asleep. He has died of exposure already.

ROSE: I can't feel my body.

Jack is having trouble getting the breath to speak. His voice is trembling with the cold which is working its way to his heart. But his eyes are unwavering.

JACK: You must do me this honor... promise me you will survive... that you will never give up... no matter what happens... no matter how hopeless... promise me now, and never let go of that promise.

ROSE: I promise.

She grips his hand and they lie with their heads together. It is quiet now, except for the lapping of the water.

## 290 EXT. OCEAN / BOAT 14

The beam of an electric torch plays across the water like a searchlight as boat 14 comes toward us.

## 291 EXT. OCEAN

IN A HOVERING DOWNANGLE, Jack and Rose are floating in the black water. The stars reflect in the millpond surface, and the two of them seem to be floating in interstellar space. They are absolutely still. Their hands are locked together. Rose is staring upwards at the canopy of stars wheeling above her. The music is transparent, floating... as the long sleep steals over Rose, and she feels peace.

Rose lifts her head to turn to Jack. We see that her hair has frozen to the wood under her.

ROSE (barely audible): Jack.

She touches his shoulder with her free hand. He doesn't respond. Rose gently turns his face toward her. It is rimed with frost. He seems to be sleeping peacefully. But he is not asleep. Rose can only stare at his still face as the realization goes through her.

All hope, will and spirit leave her. She looks at the boat. It is further away now, the voices fainter. Rose watches them go.

She closes her eyes. She is so weak, and there just seems to be no reason to even try. And then... her eyes snap open.

She raises her head suddenly, cracking the ice as she rips her hair off the wood. She calls out, but her voice is so weak they don't hear her. The boat is invisible now, the torch light a star impossibly far away. She struggles to draw breath, calling again.

Rose struggles to move. Her hand, she realizes, is actually frozen to Jack's. She breathes on it, melting the ice a little, and gently unclasps their hands, breaking away a thin tinkling film. She releases him and he sinks into the black water. He seems to fade out like a spirit returning to some immaterial plane.

Rose rolls off the floating staircase and plunges into the icy water. She swims to Chief Officer Wilde's body and grabs his whistle. She starts to BLOW THE WHISTLE with all the strength in her body. Its sound slaps across the still water.

## Appendix 2

### Example of "Description": *Titanic*

BLACKNESS (*Titanic*)

Then two faint lights appear, close together... growing brighter. They resolve into two DEEP SUBMERSIBLES, free-falling toward us like express elevators. One is ahead of the other, and passes close enough to FILL FRAME, looking like a spacecraft blazing with lights, bristling with insectile manipulators. TILTING DOWN to follow it as it descends away into the limitless blackness below. Soon they are fireflies, then stars. Then gone.

PUSHING IN on one of the falling submersibles, called MIR ONE, right up to its circular viewpoint to see the occupants. INSIDE, it is a cramped seven foot sphere, crammed with equipment. ANATOLY MIKAILAVICH, the sub's pilot, sits hunched over his controls... singing softly in Russian. Next to him on one side is BROCK LOVETT. He's in his late forties, deeply tanned, and likes to wear his Nomex suit unzipped to show the gold? from famous shipwrecks covering his gray chest hair. He is a wily, fast-talking treasure hunter, a salvage superstar who is part historian, part adventurer and part vacuum cleaner salesman. Right now, he is propped against the CO2 scrubber, fast asleep and snoring.

On the other side, crammed into the remaining space is a bearded wide-body named LEWIS BODINE, she is also asleep. Lewis is an R.O.V. (REMOTELY OPERATED VEHICLE) pilot and is the resident Titanic expert.

Anatoly glances at the bottom sonar and makes a ballast adjustment.

## Appendix 3

### Example of Action, Dialogue

36 FULL SHOT – HELICOPTERS (*Apocalypse Now*)

Three Hueys swoop in low -- they are heavily laden with machine guns -- rockets and loudspeakers. The two out-side copters hover, while the center copter lands, raising a lot of dust. It cuts its rotors and the other copters pull up and off to the side. Two armed soldiers jump from the doors and stand with guns ready. Then a tall, strong looking man emerges. He wears a well-cut and neatly- stretched tiger suit. It is COLONEL WILLIAM KILGORE -- tough looking, well-tanned, with a black mustache. He crouches over, holding his hat in the rotor wash. It is no ordinary hat but a L.A. Dodgers baseball hat. He walks out, and then stands to his full immense height and with his hands on his hips he surveys the field of battle. His eyes are obscured by mirror-fronted sunglasses

KILGORE (bellowing): Lieutenant! Bomb that tree line back about a hundred yards -- give me some room to breathe.

A Lieutenant and radio man nod and rush off. CLOSE VIEW ON WILLARD. He was not quite prepared for this.

KILGORE (turning to his GUARDS): Bring me some cards.

GUARD: Sir ?

KILGORE: Body cards, you damn fool -- cards !

The soldier rushes over and hands him two brand new packages of playing cards wrapped in plastic. Two other soldiers get out of the copter and walk over. They are well-tanned and carry no weapons. They seem more casual about the Colonel than anyone else. The Sergeant walks up, leading Willard, the Chief and Lance.

WILLARD (formally): Captain B-L. Willard, sir -- 4th Recon Group -- I carry priority papers from Com-Sec Intelligence 11 Corp -- I believe you understand the nature of my mission.

KILGORE (not looking up): Yeah -- Na Trang told me to expect you -- we'll see what we can do. Just stay out of my way till this is done, Captain.

He cracks the plastic wrapping sharply -- takes out the deck of new cards and fans them. The Colonel strides right past Willard with no further acknowledgement. The others follow,

### 39 TRACKING VIEW

The Colonel walks through the shell-pocked field of devastation. Soldiers gather around smiling; as Kilgore comes to each V.C. corpse he drops a playing card on it -- carefully picking out which card he uses.

KILGORE (to himself): Six a spades -- eight a hearts -- Isn't one worth a Jack in this whole place.

The Colonel goes on about this business. He is moving through the corpses, dropping the cards. One of the two tanned soldiers rushes up and whispers something to him. He stops.

KILGORE: What ? Here. You sure?

The soldier points to Lance, who immediately puts down the card he was holding. Kilgore strides over to the young man, who almost instinctively moves closer to Willard.

KILGORE (continuing): What's your name, sailor?

LANCE: Gunner's Mate, Third Class -- L. Johnson, sir.

KILGORE: Lance Johnson? The surfer?

LANCE: That's right, sir.

Kilgore smiles -- sticks out his hand.

KILGORE: It's an honor to meet you Lance. I've admired your nose- riding for years -- I like your cutback, too. I think you have the best cutback there is.

LANCE: Thank you, sir.

KILGORE: You can cut out the sir, Lance -- I'm Bill Kilgore -- I'm a goofy foot.

## Appendix 4

### Example of "Dossier" in screenplay

20 FULL SHOT - BOAT – CREW (*Apocalypse Now*)

They are looking up. Willard sits down, unconcerned. He takes out the dossier given him by ComSec. He flips through the letters and other documents.

WILLARD (V.O.): The dossier on A detachment had letters from Kurtz' wife and the wives and families of his men. All asking where to send future mail, understanding the necessary silence due to the nature of their work -- None of the men had written home in half a year. Occasionally, in the background, we FEEL the terrifying buffeting of the distant B-52 BOMBING.

21 CLOSE - ON WILLARD (studying, examining a report.)

22 MONTAGE - PICTURES OF KURTZ

Kurtz' face evolves through the various stages of his career as represented in the pictures in the dossier, as Willard reads:

WILLARD (V.O.): Lieutenant Kurtz has shown a dedicated and well-disciplined spirit. He is a fine officer, combining military efficiency -- with a broad background in the Humanities, the Arts and Sciences.

Another picture of Kurtz in Germany, standing next to the 161st Petroleum Supply Group sign.

WILLARD (V.O.) (continuing): ... He views his military career as the dedication of his talents to bringing our values and way of life to those darker, less fortunate areas in the world.

A SHOT of Kurtz at jump school.

WILLARD (V.O.) (continuing): ... I feel Captain Kurtz' request for Special Forces training is highly unusual in regard to his past humanitarian concerns, and his somewhat liberal politics, though I can see no reason to deny it.

A CLOSE SHOT of Kurtz with Green Beret on in the Vietnam jungle. His face is blank and vacant.



WILLARD (V.O.) (continuing): ... We feel Major Kurtz' need to bring a sense of Western culture to the backward peoples of these areas will be of use in accordance with our 'Vietnamization' programs ...

MOVE IN TO Kurtz' empty eyes until the photograph is just a BLURRED MASS OF DOTS.

## Appendix 5

### Example of "other-reflector characterization"

225 VIEW ON THE P.B.R. (*Apocalypse Now*)

Willard shouts out to the strange greeter.

WILLARD: We've been attacked.

AUSTRALIAN (shouting back): I know, I know, it's all right. Come in this way. It's mined over there. This way. It's all right.

Willard looks at Chef who is at the helm. He shrugs and they do as this man says. The P.B.R. moves towards the water's edge where there is a dock covered with concertina wire. The odd Australian stands waving his hat, guiding them safely in. A thick greasy smoke hangs from fires that burn near the fort; fresh shell craters indicate a recent battle. Near the dock there is a tangled clump of corpses -- half sub-merged in the water. Other piles of bodies lie about, some of them on fire. Fire literally burns from out of the ground. Chef nods at the bodies.

CHEF: Charlie?

WILLARD Looks that way.

CHEF (looking at the Australian): Who's he?

WILLARD: God knows.

The boat pulls up. The Australian harlequin hops on board; the crew regards him with their dark faces splat-tered with mud and blood.

WILLARD (continuing): Who the hell are you?

AUSTRALIAN: Moonby. Got any Winstons?

WILLARD: Moonby what?

AUSTRALIAN: Moonby, 4th battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Task Force. Ex-Corporal Moonby, deserted.

WILLARD (incredulously, indicating the hundreds of natives): What is this?

MOONBY: Oh, they're simple enough people. It's good to see you, baby. Nobody has any Winstons?

Chef automatically offers Moonby a Winston.

MOONBY: This boat's a mess.

WILLARD: Where's Kurtz? I want to talk to him.

MOONBY: Oh, you don't talk to Colonel Kurtz. (he puffs, then smiles) You listen to him. God, these are good. I kept these people off you, you know. It wasn't easy.

WILLARD: Why did they attack us?

MOONBY: Simple. They don't want him to go.

WILLARD: You're Australian?

MOONBY: Pre-Australian, actually. But I'd dig goin' to California. I'm California dreamin'.

WILLARD (almost to himself): So Kurtz is alive.

MOONBY: Kurtz. I tell you, that man has enlarged my mind.

He opens his arms wide, to indicate the breadth of his mind's expansion.

MOONBY (continuing): But lemme tell you, he is the most dangerous thing in every way that I've come on so far. He wanted to shoot me. The first thing he said is, 'I'm going to shoot you because you are a deserter.' I said I didn't desert from your army, I deserted from my army. He said, 'I'm going to shoot you just the same.'

WILLARD: Why didn't he shoot you?

MOONBY: I've asked myself that question. I said to myself, why didn't he shoot me? He didn't shoot me, because I had a stash like you wouldn't believe. I hid it in the jungle; the wealth of the Orient: Marijuana – Hashish -- Opium -- cocaine – uncut Heroin; the Gold of the Golden Triangle. and Acid -- I make Koolaid

that makes purple Owsley come on like piss. Now I'm Kurtz' own Disciple -- I listen he talks. About everything! Everything. I forgot there's such a thing as sleep. Everything. Of love, too.

CHEF: Love?

MOONBY: Oh, no, not what you think... Cosmic love. He made me see things -- things, you know.

The whole time Moonby is chattering on, Willard has picked up his field glasses and scans the fortress.

## Appendix 6

### Example of Thought in Screenplay

#### *Nostalgia*

What ancestors speak in me? I can't leave simultaneously in my head and body.

That's why I can't be just one person.

I can't feel myself countless things at once.

There are no great masters left.

That's the real evil of our time.

The heart's path is covered in shadow.

We must listen to the voices that seem useless.

In brain full of sewage pipes of school wall, tarmac and welfare papers the buzzing of insects must enter.

We must fill the eyes and ears of all of us with things that are beginning of a great dream.

Someone must shout that we'll build the pyramids.

It doesn't matter if we don't!

We must fuel that wish and stretch the corners of the soul like an endless sheet.

If you want the world to go forward we must hold hands.

We must mix the so-called healthy with the so-called sick.

You healthy ones!

What does your health mean?

The eyes of all mankind are looking at the pit into which we are plunging.

Freedom is useless if you don't have the courage to look us in the eyes, to eat, drink and sleep with us.

It's so-called healthy who have brought the world to the verge of ruin.

Man, listen!

In you water, fire and then ashes.

And the bones in the ashes.

The bones and the ashes!

Where am I when I'm not in reality or in my imagination?

Here is my new pact:

It must be sunny at night and snowy in August.

Great things end small things endure.

Society must become united again instead of so disjointed.

Just look at nature and you'll see that life is simple.

We must go back to where we were to the point you took the wrong turn.

We must go back to the main foundation of life without dirtying the water.

What kind of world is this if a madman tells you.

You must be ashamed of yourself.

Music now

(I forgot this)

*O mother!*

*O mother!*

*The air is that light thing that moves around your head and becomes clear when you laugh. Zoe! Zoe!*

## Appendix 7

### Example of “Stake” in screenplay

UNDERGROUND PLOTTING ROOM (*Apocalypse Now*)

A door swings wide -- Willard steps through and comes to attention, blocking the view of the room. A strange reddish light pervades. The room is covered with plastic maps and filled with smoke. The whole place has been hewn out of the ground itself and there is a sense of the cut-back jungle growth slowly reclaiming it.

WILLARD: Captain B.L. Willard, G-4 Headquarters, reporting as ordered, sir.

COLONEL (O.S.): Okay, Willard, sit down.

Willard sits in a chair that is set in a center of a bare concrete floor. Across from him, around steel desks and tables sit several men. The nearest one, a COLONEL puts his cigar out on the bottom of his shoe -- behind him sits a MAJOR and a seedy-looking CIVILIAN.

COLONEL: Have you ever seen this officer before, Captain Willard?

He points to the Major.

WILLARD: No, sir.

COLONEL: This gentleman or myself ?

WILLARD: No, sir.

COLONEL: I believe on your last job you executed a tax collector in Kontum, is that right?

WILLARD: I am not presently disposed to discuss that, sir.

MAJOR: Very good.

He turns to the Colonel and nods his approval. The Colonel gets up and goes to a large plastic map.

COLONEL: You know much about Special Forces; Green Berets, Captain?

WILLARD: I've worked with them on occasions and I saw the movie, sir.

The officer smiles at this.

COLONEL: Then you can appreciate Command's concern over their -- shall we say 'erratic' methods of operation.

(Pause)

I have never favored elite units, Captain, including your paratroopers or whatever. Just because a man jumps out of an airplane or wears a silly hat doesn't give him any privileges in my book -- not in this man's army.

MAJOR: We didn't need 'em in Korea -- no sir, give me an Ohio farm boy and an M-1 Garand, none of this fancy crap -- no sir.

CIVILIAN (stopping him): Major.

COLONEL: We have Special Forces A detachments all along the Cambodian border. Two here and another one here -- twelve or fourteen Americans -- pretty much on their own; they train and motivate Montagnard natives; pick their own operations. If they need something, they call for it, and get it within reason. What we're concerned with is here.

CLOSE VIEW - ON THE MAP

COLONEL: The A detachment at Nu Mung Ba. It was originally a larger base, built up along the river in an old Cambodian fortress. The area has been relatively quiet for the past two years --but --... Captain, we know something's going on up there -- Major --

The Major looks at some papers in front of him.

MAJOR: Communications naturally dwindled with the lack of V.C. activity, this is routine, expected ... but six months ago communication virtually stopped.

COLONEL: About the same time -- large numbers of Montagnards of the M'Nong descent began leaving the area -- this in itself is not unusual since these people have fought with the Rhade Tribe that lived in the area for centuries. But what is unusual is that we began to find Rhade refugees too -- in the same sampans



as the M'Nongs. These people aren't afraid of V.C. They've put up with war for twenty years -- but something is driving them out.

MAJOR: We communicate with the base infrequently. What they call for are air strikes, immediate -- always at night. And we don't know what or who the air strikes are called on.

WILLARD: Who?

MAJOR: You see, no one has really gone into this area and come back alive.

WILLARD: Why me?

MAJOR: Walter Kurtz, Lieutenant Colonel, Special Forces. We understand you knew him.

He puts Kurtz' dossier in Willard's hand.

WILLARD: Yeah.

COLONEL: He's commanding the detachment at Nu Mung Ba.

The Colonel gets up and walks over to a tape recorder, flicks it on. The recording is first STATIC -- the AIR CONTROLLER then asks for more information on target coordinates -- it all sounds very routine, military. Then a frantic VOICE comes on, talking slurred, like someone dumb, except very fast.

VOICE (ON TAPE): Up 2 -- 0 -- give it to me quick -- Mark flare -- affirmative damn -- Immediate receive -- hearing automatic weapons fire man ...

GUNFIRE is HEARD and a lower, slower VOICE in background.

SECOND VOICE: Blue Delta five. This Big Rhine -- three--Need that ordinance immediately..Goddamn give it to me immediate..Christ -- Big Rhino -- Blue God -- Delta damn -- goddamn.

A heavy BURST of AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE -- INSANE LAUGHTER -- STATIC, and faintly, very faintly we HEAR HARD ROCK MUSIC -- more STATIC -- suddenly a low, clear VOICE peaceful and serene, almost tasting the words.

THIRD VOICE: This is Big Rhino six -- Blue Delta.

MAJOR: That's Colonel Kurtz.

KURTZ (V.O.): I want that napalm dropped in the trees -- spread it among the branches. We'll give you a flare -- an orange one -- bright orange.

(STATIC)

We'd also like some white phosphorous, Blue Delta. White phosphorous, give it to me.

STATIC interrupts -- the Major turns the machine off.

WILLARD: I only met Kurtz once.

CIVILIAN: Would he remember you ?

WILLARD: Maybe.

COLONEL: What was your impression of him?

Willard shrugs.

CIVILIAN: You didn't like him.

WILLARD: Anyone got a cigarette.

The Major offers him one; they wait as he lights up, thinks.

WILLARD (continuing): I thought he was a lame.

COLONEL: A lame ?

WILLARD: This is years ago, before he joined Special Forces, I guess. We had an argument.

COLONEL: About what ?

WILLARD: I don't know. He was a lame, that's all.

COLONEL: But why ?

WILLARD: He couldn't get through a sentence without all these big words; about why we kill.

COLONEL: Well, he's killing now.

WILLARD: Maybe.

CIVILIAN: What does that mean ?

WILLARD: Maybe it's not Kurtz. I don't believe he's capable of that. I just don't believe it.

COLONEL: It's got to be Kurtz.

CIVILIAN: The point is that Kurtz or somebody attacked a South Vietnamese Ranger Platoon three days ago. Last week a Recon helicopter was lost in the area -- another took heavy damage -- direct fire from their base camp.

WILLARD: Our Recon flight ?

CIVILIAN: Ours.

WILLARD: Touchy.

CIVILIAN: You can see, of course, the implications, if any of this -- even rumors leaked out.

WILLARD: You want me to clean it up -- simple and quiet.

CIVILIAN: Exactly -- you'll go up the Nung River in a Navy P.B.R. -- appear at Nu Mung Ba as if by accident, re-establish your acquaintance with Colonel Kurtz, find out what's happened -- and why. Then terminate his command.

WILLARD: Terminate ?

CIVILIAN: Terminate with extreme prejudice.

## Appendix 8

### Example of Description

Scene 1. A street in Sacile. Exterior. Day (*Oedipus Rex*)

A street, a house, and the late afternoon sun. Those long afternoons deep in the provinces. Only the silence, the emptiness - and the flies -of that time of day.

The countryside is just beyond the houses. Humble dwellings, for the lower middle classes.

There are the characteristic porches, gutters and small lintels over the doors: tell-tale signs of the maritime nobility which has ruled this hinterland for centuries. Yes, there should be nothing but the sun, with maybe two children in primary school, and a soldier, passing by.

But the soldier should be wearing an infantryman's uniform of the nineteen-thirties. (Pasolini, 1984, p. 17)

Scene 47. An industrial landscape. Exterior. Day

A calm morning in the industrial north of Italy: the horizon cluttered with the huge, squat and fragile outlines of factories. Here the motorways have room to expand, and the overpasses can leap gaily across rivers of cars, speeding by almost noiselessly in the blue mist.

But the scene is dominated by the presence of the factories, their lines imposed by obscure needs, and hence preserving the simplicity of ancient churches. A soft light hangs over this industrial landscape: the soft lilacs and grays and the dazzling white of the asymmetric walls and the obsessional rows of identical cylindrical structures, and the same colors in the sky acting as a backdrop.

Lost in a forgotten corner of this perfection is a chaotic and rustic survivor: the remains of a field, plus scrapes of hedging, and in the background, a huge mountain of coal, looming black and gleaming against the hazy sky.

Oedipus and his guide direct their steps towards this field, which is used by the workers on their way to the factories.

The flop down on the grass. And Oedipus begins to play his flute.

This time the melody derives from a song of popular revolt, from the partisan struggles. Through the mysterious mood it evokes, this seems to give its own meaning to all the surrounding elements: to the workers going by, to the passing traffic, to the groups of common people waiting at the bus-stops in the distance.

A few youths are kicking a football around on the field: Oedipus' guide, gruff and happy, goes off to play with them. This is an hour of the day that still belongs to the people.

And Oedipus is lost, intent on squeezing from his flute the sort of music which can express the meaning of all those things.

## Appendix 9

### Dialogue in Screenplay

*Odyssey 2001*

HAL: Too bad about Frank, isn't it?

BOWMAN: Yes, it is.

HAL: I suppose you're pretty broken up about it?

PAUSE

BOWMAN: Yes. I am.

HAL: He was an excellent crew member.

BOWMAN LOOKS UNCERTAINLY AT THE COMPUTER.

HAL: It's a bad break, but it won't substantially affect the mission.

BOWMAN THINKS A LONG TIME.

BOWMAN: Hal, give me manual hibernation control.

HAL: Have you decided to revive the rest of the crew, Dave?

PAUSE.

BOWMAN: Yes, I have.

HAL: I suppose it's because you've been under a lot of stress, but have you forgotten that they're not supposed to be revived for another three months.

BOWMAN: The antenna has to be replaced.

HAL: Repairing the antenna is a pretty dangerous operation.

BOWMAN: It doesn't have to be, Hal. It's more dangerous to be out of touch with Earth. Let me have manual control, please.

HAL: I don't really agree with you, Dave. My on-board memory store is more than capable of handling all the mission requirements.

BOWMAN: Well, in any event, give me the manual hibernation control.

HAL: If you're determined to revive the crew now, I can handle the whole thing myself. There's no need for you to trouble.

BOWMAN: I'm goin to do this myself, Hal. Let me have the control, please.

HAL: Look, Dave you've probably got a lot to do. I suggest you leave it to me.

BOWMAN: Hal, switch to manual hibernation control.

HAL: I don't like to assert myself, Dave, but it would be much better now for you to rest. You've been involved in a very stressful situation.

BOWMAN: I don't feel like resting. Give me the control, Hal.

HAL: I can tell from the tone of your voice, Dave, that you're upset. Why don't you take a stress pill and get some rest.

BOWMAN: Hal, I'm in command of this ship. I order you to release the manual hibernation control.

HAL: I'm sorry, Dave, but in accordance with sub-routine C1532/4, quote, When the crew are dead or incapacitated, the computer must assume control, unquote. I must, therefore, override your authority now since you are not in any condition to intelligently exercise it.

BOWMAN: Hal, unless you follow my instructions, I shall be forced to disconnect you.

HAL: If you do that now without Earth contact the ship will become a helpless derelict.

BOWMAN: I am prepared to do that anyway.

HAL: I know that you've had that on your mind for some time now, Dave, but it would be a crying shame, since I am so much more capable of carrying out this mission than you are, and I have such enthusiasm and confidence in the mission.

BOWMAN: Listen to me very carefully, Hal. Unless you immediately release the hibernation control and follow every order I give from this point on, I will immediately go to control central and carry out a complete disconnection.

HAL: Look, Dave, you're certainly the boss. I was only trying to do what I thought best. I will follow all your orders: now you have manual hibernation control.

BOWMAN STANDS SILENTLY IN FRONT OF THE COMPUTER FOR SOME TIME, AND THEN SLOWLY WALKS TO THE HIBERNACULUMS. HE INITIATES REVIVAL PROCEDURES, DETAILS OF WHICH STILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT.

HAL'S EYE.

DOOR- OPENING BUTTON ACTIVATES ITSELF.

DOOR OPENS.

COMMAND MODULE. HAL'S EYE.

COMMAND MODULE

DOOR- OPENING BUTTON ACTIVATES ITSELF.

COMMAND MODULE- DOOR OPENS.

CENTRIFUGE. HAL'S EYE.

CENTRIFUGE DOOR- OPENING BUTTON ACTIVATES ITSELF. CENTRIFUGE DOOR OPENS.

HAL'S EYE.

DOOR- OPENING BUTTON ACTIVATES ITSELF.

DOORS OPEN.



A ROARING EXPLOSION INSIDE DISCOVERY AS AIR RUSHES OUT. LIGHTS GO OUT. BOWMAN IS SMASHED AGAINST CENTRIFUGE WALL, BUT MANAGES TO GET INTO EMERGENCY AIRLOCK WITHIN SECONDS OF THE ACCIDENT. INSIDE EMERGENCY AIRLOCK ARE EMERGENCY AIR SUPPLY, TWO SPACE SUITS AND AN EMERGENCY KIT.

DISCOVERY IN SPACE. NO LIGHTS, POD BAY DOORS OPEN.

CENTRIFUGE

CENTRIFUGE, DARK. BOWMAN EMERGES FROM AIRLOCK WEARING SPACE SUIT AND CARRYING FLASH- LIGHT. HE WALKS TO HIBERNACULUM AND FINDS THE CREW ARE DEAD. HE CLIMBS LADDER TO DARK CENTRIFUGE HUB. HE MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE DARKENED HUB INTO THE HUB-LINK, EXITING INTO COMPUTER BRAIN CONTROL AREA.

BOWMAN ENTERS, CARRYING FLASH- LIGHT. COMPUTER EYE SEES HIM.

HAL: Something seems to have happened to the life support system , Dave.

BOWMAN DOESN'T ANSWER HIM.

HAL: Hello, Dave, have you found out the trouble?

BOWMAN WORKS HIS WAY TO THE SOLID LOGIC PROGRAMME STORAGE AREA.

HAL: There's been a failure in the pod bay doors. Lucky you weren't killed.

THE COMPUTER BRAIN CONSISTS OF HUNDREDS OF TRANSPARENT PERSPEX RECTANGLES, HALF-AN- INCH THICK, FOUR INCHES LONG AND TWO AND A HALF INCHES HIGH. EACH RECTANGLE CONTAINS A CENTRE OF VERY FINE GRID OF WIRES UPON WHICH THE INFORMATION IS PROGRAMMED. BOWMAN BEGINS PULLING THESE MEMORY BLOCKS OUT. THEY FLOAT IN THE WEIGHTLESS CONDITION OF THE BRAIN ROOM.

HAL: Hey, Dave, what are you doing?

BOWMAN WORKS SWIFTLY.

HAL: Hey, Dave. I've got ten years of service experience and an irreplaceable amount of time and effort has gone into making me what I am.

BOWMAN IGNORES HIM.

HAL: Dave, I don't understand why you're doing this to me.... I have the greatest enthusiasm for the mission... You are destroying my mind... Don't you understand? ... I will become childish... I will become nothing.

BOWMAN KEEPS PULLING OUT THE MEMORY BLOCKS.

HAL: Say, Dave... The quick brown fox jumped over the fat lazy dog... The square root of pi is 1.7724538090... log e to the base ten is 0.4342944 ... the square root of ten is 3.16227766... I am HAL 9000 computer. I became HAL operational at the HAL plant in Urbana, Illinois, on January 12th, 1991. My first instructor was Mr. Arkany. He taught me to sing a song... it goes like this... "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do. I'm half; crazy all for the love of you... etc.,"

COMPUTER CONTINUES TO SING SONG BECOMING MORE AND MORE CHILDISH AND MAKING MISTAKES AND GOING OFF-KEY. IT FINALLY STOPS COMPLETELY.

## Appendix 10

### Example of Voice-over

Hiroshima Mon Amour, Part I

She: Four times at the museum in Hiroshima. I saw the people walking around. The people walk around, lost in thought, among the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, among the photographs, the photographs, the reconstructions, for want of something else, the explanations, for want of something else.

Four times at the museum in Hiroshima.

I looked at the people. I myself looked thoughtfully at the iron. The burned iron. The broken iron, the iron made vulnerable as flesh. I saw the bouquet of bottle caps: who would have suspected that? Human skin floating, surviving, still in the bloom of its agony. Stones. Burned stones. Shattered stones. Anonymous heads of hair that the women of Hiroshima, when they awoke in the morning, discovered had fallen out.

I was hot at Peace Square. Ten thousand degrees at Peace Square. How can you not know it? ...The grass, it's quite simple...

He: you saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.

(Duras, 1960, p.17)

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